

THE WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES

EDITED BY

L. CRANMER-BYNG, F.R.S.A.

ALAN W. WATTS

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THE BOOK OF MENCIUS

# The Book of Mencius

(abridged)

Translated from the Chinese by  
LIONEL GILES

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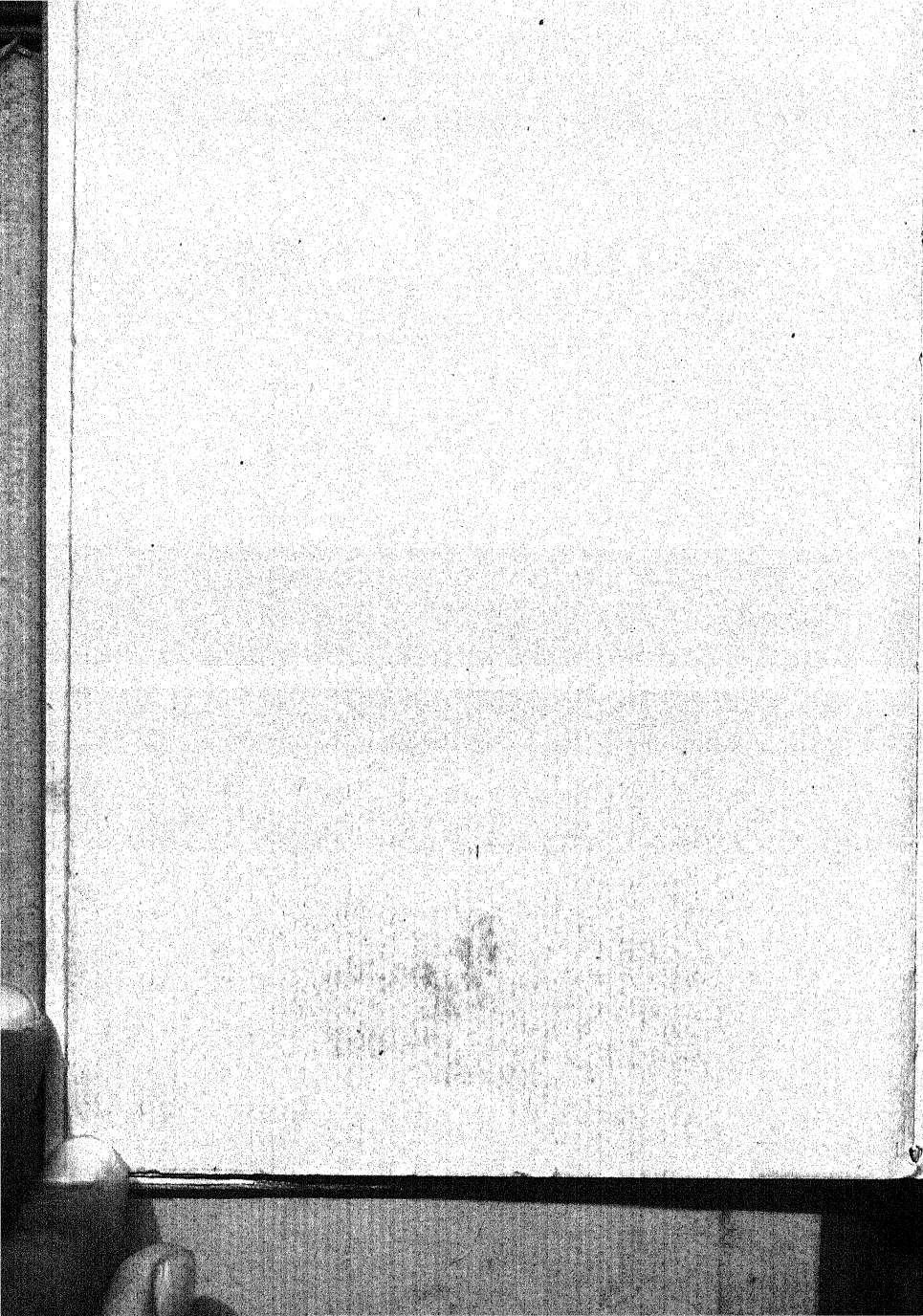
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EDITORIAL NOTE

*THE object of the editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought and the new of Action. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nation of another creed and colour.*

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## INTRODUCTION

THE Chou dynasty, which lasted from 1122 to 249 B.C., was feudalistic in character, and thus very different from all those that followed it in the long course of Chinese history. This is a point to be borne in mind by anyone approaching the Book of Mencius for the first time who wishes to understand the conditions which determined his career. Three periods may be distinguished: during the first of these, the country was divided up into a very large number of vassal states, over which the King's authority was paramount. In the second, the power of the sovereign waned rapidly, and a series of dictators arose who usurped his functions and made their kingdoms practically independent. This period may be taken to end with the death of Confucius in 479 B.C. The third is the period of the Fighting States. A continual process of absorption or annexation had greatly reduced the number of kingdoms, until there remained only half a dozen or so that really counted in the struggle for supremacy. Of these, we hear most of Ch'i in the east, Ch'u in the south, and Ch'in in the west, which finally swallowed all its rivals. The population of the last two contained considerable non-Chinese elements.

Thus it was a restless, uneasy world into which Mencius was

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born in 372 B.C. His surname was Mêng and his personal name K'ô; 'Mencius' is the latinized form of Mêng Tzũ, 'the Philosopher Mêng', just as 'Confucius' represents K'ung Fu Tzũ, 'the Master K'ung'. Almost as little is known about his life as that of Aristotle and other Greek philosophers with whom he was contemporary. According to certain anecdotes of a legendary nature which are told of his widowed mother, she was a woman of strong character, and showed firmness and wisdom in bringing up a son who cannot have been remarkable for docility. Born in the small principality of Tsou, which adjoined Confucius's native State of Lu, he does not figure on the political stage until the age of forty. Of the intervening years there is no reliable record, but he must have devoted much time to the study of Confucian ethics and principles of government, for his distinction as a teacher soon attracted a number of disciples who afterwards attended him on his journeys to other States. Most of his public life was spent in Ch'i, and other noteworthy visits were made to the less important States of T'êng, Liang, and Lu.

Like Confucius before him, Mencius made many fruitless attempts to find a ruler who would adopt his theories of government and put his principles into practice. The causes of his failure to win the complete confidence of the princes whom he approached are not far to seek; to begin with, he was inclined to be tactless, and sometimes unnecessarily rude; his childlike faith in the essential goodness of human nature and its power to revolutionize the world was doubtless

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sincere, but it was expressed in extravagant terms which must have raised doubts as to his worldly wisdom ; he was obsessed with the wonderful (but largely imaginary) achievements of the philosopher kings of remote antiquity, and seemed to think it was enough to hold their example up for imitation without considering how far it was possible to apply their methods to the problems of his own day. But pride, perhaps, was the chief obstacle that prevented his making headway. Rather unreasonably, he expected rulers to seek him out and humbly ask for instruction, while he himself was chary of making any advances that might compromise his personal dignity in the slightest degree.

His best opportunity came to him in Ch'i, where the King received him with honour, and seems to have been really impressed by his teaching. But each was afraid of appearing too eager, the King feeling no doubt that something was due to his rank, while Mencius refused to bate a jot of his rugged independence. As a result, their relations became strained, and in the end Mencius left the country, though the King made a well-meant effort to detain him, and he himself was obviously loth to go. A second sojourn in Ch'i some years later was not much more successful. He accepted an appointment at Court, but his demeanour was as stern and unbending as before, and his influence suffered in consequence. He gave a conditional sanction to an onslaught on the Yen State, which was badly misgoverned, but expressed strong disapproval of the harsh measures taken by the conquerors, and foretold a popular rising. When this occurred, the King

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of Ch'i felt that he could not face his counsellor without shame, and this seems to have led to Mencius's final departure. It was from the Duke of Lu, however, about the year 309, that he received the rebuff which convinced him of the futility of struggling any longer against fate, and the last twenty years of his life were spent in retirement.

Whereas the Confucian Analects contain much on the subject of the Master's personal habits and peculiarities, we find nothing of that sort in the Book of Mencius ; nor could it indeed be expected if the work was compiled under his own supervision. Yet somehow we seem to know him better than we know Confucius, who suffers a little from having been placed on a pedestal by his admirers. Both the weak and the strong points of his character are revealed all the more clearly because the revelation is made unconsciously and without any attempt to influence our judgement. His deep conviction and enthusiasm for the truth, his courage, independence and honesty of purpose he shared with the older Sage, but Confucius seems to have been free from some of his more serious faults—his want of humility, his intolerance of other men's opinions, his self-complacency and blindness to his own failings. Mencius shows a more active sympathy with the lives and sufferings of the common people, but he was not so lovable a man, if we may judge from the comparatively small number of his disciples and the absence of any personal tributes such as Confucius received from many quarters. His scholastic routine may be compared with what we hear of the ancient Greeks, and he would argue

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with other teachers much as Socrates disputed with the sophists in Athens. Mencius, however, was far from possessing the calm temper and cool irony of Socrates. We do not find him seeking to elicit the truth by skilful questioning, but dogmatically laying down the law to his hearers, or trying to confound his adversaries with biting sarcasm. Like Dr. Johnson, whom he resembles in more than one respect, he was apt to resort to verbal sophistries in order to come off triumphant; and when criticised himself, he was never at a loss to justify his own words or conduct.

The philosophy of Mencius has come down to us in seven books, containing a total of some 35,000 characters in 260 chapters. More than half of these are included in the present translation. The time and method of compilation are matters of dispute, but there is little reason to doubt the general truth of the statement made by the historian Ssü-ma Ch'ien, that Mencius compiled the work after his retirement along with some of the disciples of his own disciple Wan Chang. This may mean that Wan Chang had taken notes of Mencius's conversations, which his disciples submitted to the philosopher for revision and correction, and that these were published by the same disciples, probably after Mencius's death. In Chinese philosophical works there is seldom much attempt at systematic arrangement, and it is certainly difficult to trace any principle of order, chronological or other, in these writings. Thus, the first book begins with the instruction given to King Hui of Liang, whom Mencius did not visit until the middle of his career, several years after his first



long residence in Ch'í. His utterances are much more amply recorded than the terse and pithy sayings placed in the mouth of Confucius, and his teachings are for the most part thrown into a lively and dramatic form. The text is by no means free from obscure passages, due chiefly to the conciseness of the style ; but it seldom appears to be corrupt, and is in good condition compared with most of the other philosophical works of this period. So it may be true, as an early commentator tells us, that the work escaped notice when so many other classics were marked down for destruction in the Burning of the Books decreed by the first Ch'in Emperor. If so, it was a remarkable piece of good fortune, seeing how roundly Mencius condemns all tyranny, and what short shrift he would allow even to legitimate monarchs who abused their power.

It may fairly be said that *jên*, 'benevolence', forms the centre and pivot of Confucian ethics. This rendering is not wholly satisfactory, and in some contexts such alternatives as love, humanity, altruism, charity, or simply goodness, might be preferable ; but the truth is, that no English word conveys all that is implicit in *jên*. Confucius often uses the word rather vaguely for moral virtue in general, but Mencius keeps to the stricter application, and combines it with *i*, 'righteousness' (also translated right, duty, or justice) when he wishes to sum up the essentials of human morality. He also enters the domain of psychology by analysing these and other cardinal virtues, and showing how they are derived and developed from certain primitive emotions. As a

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thinker, Mencius was evidently of opinion that the proper study of mankind is man, for he refrains from entering into questions of religion and the after life. Legge complains that 'he says very little of what we owe to God. There is no glow of natural piety in his pages.' That may be true. But it must be added that such an impression of Mencius's mental attitude is unduly heightened by translators who fight shy of the rendering 'God' for *T'ien*, although in most cases that comes nearer to the meaning than the more hazy and indefinite 'Heaven'. In several places, indeed, something not far from the conception of a personal God is clearly indicated: see the dialogue with Wan Chang on the bestowal of empire (pages 83, 84); the testing of a man by God on page 106; and the knowing and serving of God on page 108.

Whatever may be thought of his theological deficiencies, it cannot be denied that Mencius cherished noble and lofty ideals which would have made the world better and happier could they have been carried into effect. But conditions were against him; the system prevailing in his time favoured rivalry rather than harmony amongst men, and led almost inevitably to the triumph of might over right. The rightful head of the realm (who should be designated 'emperor' instead of 'king' in order to be distinguished from those feudal princes who had usurped the latter title) was now a mere nonentity, shorn of all power, and for that very reason, no doubt, had managed to escape complete extinction. The so-called vassal States were in reality autonomous kingdoms,

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served by their own chancellors, ministers, great officers, and officials of lower rank classed together under the general name of 'scholars'. This state of things had continued so long that Mencius appears quite reconciled to it. Any feudal lord, in his opinion, was justified in aspiring to imperial honours, provided only that his rule was benevolent and accepted by the whole people; nay, he goes so far as to assert that the truly benevolent prince never fails to reach this pinnacle of greatness. The same tendency to overstatement, which is not peculiar to Mencius but may be seen occurring elsewhere in Chinese literature, shows itself again in his exaggerated praise of ancient worthies such as King Wên and King Wu. These two founders of the Chou dynasty were doubtless men of eminent ability, but there is no reason to suppose that they were preternaturally wise or good. And just as the Sage Kings were transformed by a heated imagination into heroes who are far too good to be true, so it is fairly safe to assume that the accursed tyrants Chieh and Chou Hsin were not quite so black as they are painted. Much of this denigration was simply due to what has become familiar to us nowadays as propaganda, designed to justify the action of a new dynasty in expelling the old. With our greater ability to discriminate between historical truth and legend, we naturally find Mencius's worship of antiquity excessive and slightly ridiculous. But to him Yao and Shun were no shadowy wraiths of a dim past, but the unquestionable creators of a golden age in which the ideals he strove after had actually been realized on earth.

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In order to appreciate the results achieved by Mencius's lifelong efforts, we must remember that Confucianism in his day, so far from being predominant, was only one of several competing systems in the empire. Of these, two in particular laid themselves open to attack. It may seem strange that he never mentions Taoism either for praise or blame; for, besides the *Tao Tê Ching*, it is almost certain that the treatises of Chuang Tzū and Lieh Tzū<sup>1</sup> were then in existence. Their doctrines, however, may well have appeared too fantastic to be treated seriously, and in any case the Taoists had not yet coalesced into an organised body capable of influencing the direction of public affairs. It was otherwise with the teaching of Mo Ti, the exponent of universal love, and Yang Chu, the philosopher of egoism, both of whom had made a large number of converts. The venom with which Mencius attacked them, and the scorn he poured on their tenets, are explicable enough in the case of Yang, whose opinions clashed at every point with the orthodox views of Confucius; but it is not so easy to understand why he should have been equally bitter against Mo Ti, whose fundamental doctrine seems to differ so little from the benevolence preached by Mencius himself. There were several elements in Mohism, however, which rendered it objectionable to the Confucianist. One was its utilitarian bias: men should love one another because it is to their

<sup>1</sup> Selections from both these writers have been published in this series under the titles *Musings of a Chinese Mystic* and *Taoist Teachings*, respectively.

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advantage to do so. This is not true benevolence as Mencius conceives it. Again, Mo Ti advocates a return to the most primitive state of society, in which ritual will have no place, and the cult of the beautiful will disappear ; for he sets his face against the fine arts, including music, and all that they imply for the furtherance of civilisation. But what arouses our philosopher's ire most of all is the levelling tendency of the new teaching : all distinctions of family and class are to be ignored ; all men are to be loved equally, and the special claims of sovereign, parents and kinsfolk are to go unrecognised. This conflicted too sharply with the deeply rooted traditions of ancestor worship and filial piety, and in consequence Mo Ti was bracketed with Yang Chu : both were heresiarchs, and both had to be snuffed out.

The most dangerous heresy of all was already in the air, though it may not have been clearly formulated in Mencius's lifetime. This was propagated by the so-called Legalist school, which discarded the ordinary principles of morality, recommended severe laws and punishments, and glorified war. The Legalists enjoyed a short-lived triumph under the ruthless and dynamic First Emperor, but were finally swept away by the revival of Confucianism in the Han dynasty. Both Buddhism and Taoism, which were to flourish at a later date, were utterly opposed to war and violence, and could therefore exist peaceably enough under the accepted régime.

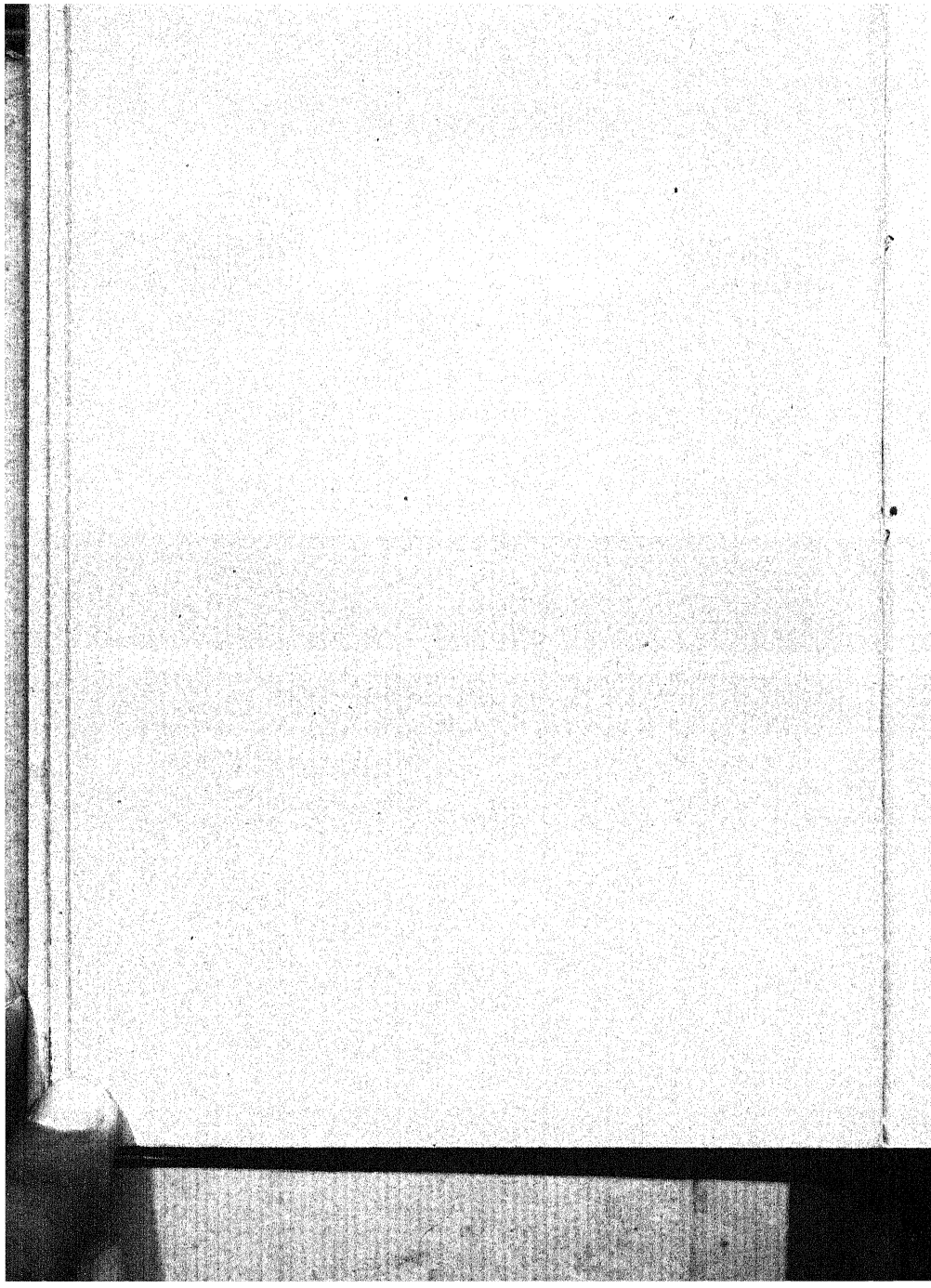
Mencius himself, of course, was an ardent pacifist. He regards military leaders who boast of their skill as no better



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than criminals, and even declares that in the whole of the 'Spring and Autumn' period, covering nearly 250 years, there had been no such thing as a righteous war. We may imagine how modern warfare, and the widespread desolation in China to-day, would have horrified him. Yet Chiang Kai-shek's heroic struggle must have won his approval, for in the last resort he gives this advice to the ruler who has reason to fear aggression from his powerful neighbours: 'Dig your moats deep, build your walls high, and guard them along with your people. Be ready to sacrifice your own life, and your people will never desert you.' Nobly indeed have the Chinese risen to the height of this expectation.

In spite of certain obvious weaknesses, Mencius cannot but appeal to us on account of his strong human sympathies, his untiring championship of the poor and the oppressed, the boldness with which he spoke his mind to the men in power and told them the truth as he saw it. He was interested above all in the welfare of the common people, and his passionate desire to alleviate the lot of the toiling masses and to bring happiness into the homes of the humble will always be remembered with gratitude by his countrymen. Even for us of an alien race, living under a different order of things, Mencius may have a message not to be despised. So long as riches, luxury and greed are tolerated within the borders of a State side by side with hopeless destitution and the misery of unemployment, his ringing protest of so many centuries ago ought to awaken an answering echo in our hearts.



# THE BOOK OF MENCIUS

## I

MENCIUS went to visit King Hui of Liang. The King said to him : You are an old man, yet you have not shrunk from a journey of a thousand *li* <sup>1</sup> in order to come hither. Doubtless you have something in your mind which will profit <sup>2</sup> my kingdom ?

Mencius replied : Why must your Majesty use that word 'profit' ? My business is with benevolence and righteousness and nothing else. If the King says, How shall I profit my kingdom ? the great officers will say, How shall we profit our families ? and the petty officers and common people will say, How shall we profit ourselves ? And while upper and lower are thus engaged in a fierce struggle for profits, the State will be brought into peril. If the ruler of ten thousand chariots is slain, it will be by a family of a thousand ; if the ruler of a thousand chariots is slain, it will be by a family of a hundred. A thousand out of ten thousand, or a hundred out of one thousand, is no small proportion of the whole. But

<sup>1</sup> A *li* is about one-third of an English mile.

<sup>2</sup> Material profit of a selfish kind is implied here.

if righteousness be considered of less importance than profit, people will never be satisfied without grasping more than they possess. As benevolence is incompatible with neglect of one's parents, so righteousness never puts the interests of one's sovereign last. Let me, then, hear your Majesty speak only of benevolence and righteousness. There is no need to use the word 'profit' at all.

\* \* \*

King Hui of Liang said : In my humble way, I really do tax my mind to its utmost on behalf of my kingdom. If things are bad on this side of the river, I transplant people to the eastern bank and convey grain to the afflicted region. If it is the people in the east who are suffering, I do the same for them. None of the neighbouring States, I observe, take as much trouble in their administration as I do ; yet their population does not tend to decrease nor mine to increase in proportion. Why is that ?

Mencius replied : Your Majesty is fond of war, so let me take an illustration from that. Your soldiers advance to the beating of drums, but after having crossed swords with the enemy they fling off their mail and run away, trailing their weapons behind them. Some may run a hundred paces, others only fifty paces before stopping. Would those who ran fifty paces be justified in laughing at those who ran a hundred?—Not at all, said the King ; for though they did not run quite so far, it was running away all the same.

Well, if you can see that, said Mencius, you must not expect your population to be greater than that of neighbouring States.

If the farmer's seasons are not interfered with, there will be more grain in the land than can be consumed. If close-meshed nets are not allowed in the pools and lakes, there will be more fish and turtles than are required for food. If the axe is brought to the forest only at the proper time, the supply of timber will exceed the demand. The people, having more grain and fish than they can eat, and more timber than they can use, will be able to live their lives and bury their dead without undue worry and vexation. To ensure this for his people is the first duty of a king.

Let homesteads of five roods<sup>1</sup> be planted with mulberry, so that all persons over fifty may be able to wear silk. Let the proper seasons be observed in the breeding of poultry, dogs and swine, so that all over seventy may be able to eat meat. Let a farm of a hundred roods be not robbed of its labour, so that a family of several persons may never go hungry. Let attention be paid to teaching in schools, with special regard to the duties of sons and brothers; then white-headed men will not be seen carrying loads along the highways. No ruler under whom the aged wear silk and eat meat, and the common people suffer neither from cold nor hunger, has ever failed to become king of the whole country.

But what is the actual state of things?—Dogs and swine

<sup>1</sup> The nearest English equivalent to a *mou*, which in Mencius's time was less than one-sixth of an acre.



## KILLING BY STATECRAFT

eat the food of men, and you know not how to stop the waste. On the roads people are starving to death, and you know not how to relieve them out of your store. When they die, you say : ' It is not my fault ; it is due to the bad harvest ' ; no better plea than if you stabbed a man to death and then said : ' It was not I that did it, it was the knife.' Do not lay the blame on the harvest, O King, and you will find the people of the whole empire flocking to you.

\* \* \*

King Hui of Liang said : I wish to receive your teaching in a calm spirit.—Mencius then said : Is there any difference between killing a man with a club and killing him with a sword ?—There is no difference, said the King.—Is there any difference between killing him with a sword and killing him by statecraft ?—No, there is none.—In your kitchen, said Mencius, you have fat meat ; in your stables you have fat horses. Yet your people have a hungry look, and in the countryside lie some who have starved to death. This is tempting beasts to devour men. Beasts that only devour one another are held in abhorrence by men. But if the father of his people so orders his government that beasts are necessarily led to devour men, what becomes of his fatherhood ? Confucius once said : ' Can the man who first made wooden images ever have had children of his own ? ' This because they were fashioned in the shape of men and buried with the dead.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Confucius thought that this had led to the practice of burying living persons with the dead, hence his protest.

What would he have thought of one who causes his people to die of hunger ?

\* \* \*

King Hui of Liang said : As you, venerable Sir, are aware, there was once no more powerful State than Chin in the Empire. But since I came to the throne,<sup>1</sup> it has been defeated in the east by Ch'i, and my eldest son lost his life there ; in the west we have lost seven hundred *li* of territory to Ch'in, and in the south we have been humiliated by Ch'u. I am truly ashamed, and wish to wipe out this disgrace for the sake of the dead. How shall I set about it ?

Mencius replied : With a territory of only a hundred *li* in extent it is possible to become overlord of the Empire. If your Majesty will confer benevolent rule on the people, lighten punishments, reduce taxation, encourage deep ploughing and the use of the hoe ; if in their spare time the able-bodied make an effort to be filial, fraternal, conscientious and faithful, rendering service to their fathers and elder brothers in the home, and out of it, to their seniors and superiors, you will then have a body of men who could use their clubs to smite the armies of Ch'in and Ch'u in spite of their heavy mail and sharp weapons. The rulers of those States rob the people of their time, so that they cannot plough and hoe to support their parents. These are left cold and hungry, while brothers, wives and children are separated and scattered abroad. Those rulers virtually ensnare and drown their own people, and if

<sup>1</sup> Of Liang, that is to say, which was one of the three States into which Chin had already been divided.

you set forth against them, who will withstand you? Hence the saying: 'The benevolent man is without an enemy.' I beg your Majesty to have no misgivings.

\* \* \*

Mencius went to see King Hsiang<sup>1</sup> of Liang. On coming out, he said to his people: At the very first sight he did not look to me like a ruler of men, and when I drew near, I saw nothing in him to inspire respect. All of a sudden he asked me: How can the Empire be brought to peace?—I replied: By being united.—Who can give it unity?—I said: A man with no lust for killing men.—But who could place it in the charge of such a man?—Everybody in the Empire will help to do so. Does your Majesty know how corn grows? During the two months of summer drought the sprouts remain dry. Then thick clouds gather in the sky and copious rain begins to fall, whereupon the corn shoots upward and grows rapidly. When this happens, who can hold it back? Now, among the shepherds of the people in this realm there is none without a lust for killing men. If such a one could be found, all the people of the Empire would crane their necks to catch a sight of him. If he were indeed a man like this, the people would flock to him as naturally as water flows downward, and in such a flood that nothing could stem its onrush.

\* \* \*

King Hsüan of Ch'i asked Mencius, saying: May I hear something about the deeds of Huan of Ch'i and Wên of

<sup>1</sup> The son of King Hui, who succeeded him in 320 B.C.

## THE FRIGHTENED OX

Chin?<sup>1</sup>—Mencius replied: No disciple of Confucius has spoken of the deeds of Huan and Wên, and so they have not been handed down to after generations. Your servant knows nothing of them. Failing that, shall I not speak of true kingship?—What quality, then, should I possess in order to become a true king?—Love and protect the common people, and none can prevent you from becoming one.—But is it within my humble capacity to love and protect the people?—It is, said Mencius.—How do you know that?—From the following incident which was told to me by Hu Ho: The King, he said, was sitting at the upper end of the hall when a man leading an ox passed through the lower part. The King saw him and asked: 'Where are you going with that ox?'—The man said: 'I am going to consecrate a bell with its blood.'—'Let it go,' said the King; 'I cannot bear to see the frightened look of the poor harmless thing as it is led to the slaughter.'—'Must the ceremony, then, be given up?'—'There is no need for that. Take a sheep instead.' Did this incident really take place?—Yes, it did, said the King.—Well, said Mencius, the feeling you showed is enough to make a true king of you. The people all thought you did this because you grudged the animal, but I know very well that it was because your Majesty could not bear to see its suffering.—Yes, said the King, that was what the people thought, no doubt. But, small though Ch'i may be, I would hardly grudge the sacrifice of one ox. It was indeed because I could not bear to see the harmless, frightened creature being taken to the slaughter that I told

<sup>1</sup> Two dictators of the seventh century B.C.

them to change it for a sheep.—Mencius said : Your Majesty must not be surprised that the people mistook your motive. You simply substituted a small animal for a large one ; and how were they to know why you did so ? If you really felt pity for its innocence as it was being led to the slaughter, what was there to choose between an ox and a sheep ?

The King laughed and said : You are right. I hardly know myself what was in my mind. I certainly did not grudge the expense ; but, seeing that I substituted a sheep, it was only natural that the people should think I was stingy.—It matters not, said Mencius : Your action really sprang from a humane impulse. You saw the ox, but had not seen the sheep. That is how the princely man feels about animals : having seen them alive, he cannot bear to see them die ; having heard their cries, he cannot bear to eat their flesh ; and on that account he keeps away from the cookhouse.—The King was pleased, and said : It is written in the *Book of Songs* : ‘I can read the hearts of my fellow-men.’ That applies to you, sir. For though the act was mine, when I came to think it over I was unable to discover my motive until you told me. There was in my mind a certain feeling of distress ; but what relation is there between this feeling and the state of true kingship ?

Mencius replied : Suppose a man came and told your Majesty that he was strong enough to lift a hundredweight, but not strong enough to lift a feather ; or sharp-sighted enough to discern the tip of an autumn hair, but not to see a cartload of fuel ; would you credit such a statement ?—No.



—Well, how is it that your sympathy can extend to the brute creation, yet fail to produce any practical results for the mass of your people? If you fail to lift a feather it comes from not using your strength; if you fail to see a cart-load of fuel it comes from not using your eyes. Similarly, if you fail to cherish your people it comes from not exerting your sympathy. Therefore, if your Majesty has not attained true kingship, it is because you will not, not because you cannot. The King asked: How would you exemplify the difference between one who will not do a thing and one who cannot?—If a man were set the task of leaping across the north sea with Mount T'ai under his arm, and said: 'I cannot do it,' his statement would be strictly true. But if a grown man had to break a twig off a tree and said: 'I cannot do it,' it would be a case not of being unable, but of not exerting himself to do it. And the case of a King who fails to act as such falls within the latter category, not within the former.

Treat your old folk with due respect, and extend this to the old folk of other families; treat your young folk with proper affection, and extend this to the young folk of other families: then the Empire will be as easy to manage as if it lay in your palm. It is said in the *Book of Songs*:

'He, a pattern to his Queen,  
Pattern to his brethren, too,  
Was welcomed thus in home and State.'

Which simply means that he brought the qualities of his mind to bear on the world around him. Thus, the widening of your sympathies enables you to cherish all within the Four

Seas ; unless you do this, you cannot cherish even your own wife and children. The point in which the men of old were so far superior to ourselves is no other than this : they knew how to widen the scope of their activities. Now, your sympathy can extend to the brute creation and yet fail to produce practical results for the people at large. Why should that be so ?

By weighing things you may know what is heavy and what is light ; by measuring things you may know what is short and what is long. So it is with all things, and most of all with the qualities of the mind. May I suggest that your Majesty should apply measurement here ? Can it be that your mind takes pleasure in the raising of mail-clad troops, in imperilling the lives of your officers and ministers, in incurring the enmity of neighbouring princes ?—Not so, replied the King ; how should I take pleasure in such things ? I am only trying to satisfy the desires that lie nearest to my heart.—Mencius said : May I hear what those desires are ?—The King only smiled and made no reply.—Are you insufficiently provided with delicacies for your table, or with light, warm clothing for your attire ? Have you not enough beauty to feast your eyes upon, or not enough music to satisfy your ear ? Or do you perhaps need more minions and attendants to stand at your beck and call ? Your Majesty's subjects are surely numerous enough to supply these things, if it is for them that you are longing.—Nay, it is for none of these.—Why, then I can guess what it is that your Majesty so greatly desires. You wish to enlarge your territory, to see the rulers of Ch'in and Ch'u at

your Court, to have all China under your control, and to dominate the four barbarian tribes. But to seek to gratify this desire in the way you do is like climbing a tree to catch fish.

—You think then, said the King, that my ambition is excessive?

—I am afraid it is indeed. Climbing a tree may not bring you any fish, but at any rate it leaves you no worse off than before.

But if you act as you are doing, and strive with might and main to achieve those ambitions of yours, calamity is bound to follow.—Will you kindly explain?—If the men of Tsou<sup>1</sup> fought against the men of Ch'u, which do you think would win?—The men of Ch'u.—The small, in fact, is no match for the great, nor the few for the many, nor the weak for the strong. Among all the countries of the earth, there are nine that cover each an area of a million square *li* and of these the Ch'i State is one. For this single State to try to conquer the other eight is exactly on a par with the Tsou State pitting itself against Ch'u. So we must go back to the root of the matter.

If in governing you gave your benevolent instincts full play, all the statesmen of the Empire would want to establish themselves at your Court, all the husbandmen would want to till your fields, all the merchants and traders would want to bestow their goods in your markets, all the travellers would want to pass along your highways, and all those who had grievances against their rulers would want to come and lay them before you. If so, who could hinder them?—I am too ignorant, said the King, to get as far as that. But help me, I

<sup>1</sup> A very small state in the present Shantung, where Mencius was born.

pray you, along the path I mean to pursue, and enlighten my mind with your teaching. In spite of my small wit, please make the attempt.

Mencius said : To maintain a steadfast heart without fixed means of livelihood is only within the power of the true scholar. As for the multitude, they have no fixed means of livelihood, so it follows that they cannot maintain a steadfast heart. Lacking that, they will become reckless and depraved : there is nothing, indeed, that they will shrink from doing. And when they have lapsed into crime, you will proceed to punish them. This is nothing more nor less than ensnaring your people. But if a benevolent ruler is on the throne, how can he do such a thing as ensnare his own subjects ? Therefore an enlightened prince will secure means of livelihood for his people, seeing that their provision suffices, on the one hand, to minister to their parents, and on the other, to support their wives and children ; so that in years of joyful abundance everybody may eat his fill, and in bad years, no one need starve to death. Thus only will he lead them irresistibly into the path of virtue, and it will be an easy task for the people to follow in the way they should go. As things are ordered at present, the people have insufficient means to minister to their parents or to support their wives and children. Even in years of abundance their whole life is one of hardship, and in bad years they are faced with starvation. Thus their whole endeavour is to escape death, and they are ever in dread of having too little for the purpose. What leisure have they to attend to their manners and morals ?

## THE CRIME OF KILLING DEER

If your Majesty wishes to put all this right, why not go back to the root of the matter? <sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

King Hsüan of Ch'í asked, saying : Is it true that King Wên had a private park of seventy square *li*?—Mencius replied : It is so stated in the records.—Was not that too large for a park?—On the contrary, his people thought it was too small.—My own park, said the King, is only 40 square *li*, yet my people think it is too large. Why is that?—The whole of King Wên's park, said Mencius, was thrown open to any who wished to gather grass and fuel or to catch pheasants and hares. He shared it with his people, so it is natural that they should have thought it too small.

When I first reached your borders, I inquired about the chief things prohibited by the government before I ventured to enter the country. And I was told that just inside the frontier gates there was a park of 40 square *li* in which the killing of a deer was as heinous a crime as the killing of a man. Under such conditions, this park is nothing less than a huge pitfall planted in the kingdom. Is it not natural that the people should consider it too large?

\* \* \*

Mencius addressed King Hsüan of Ch'í, saying : If one of your Majesty's servants were to entrust his wife and children

<sup>1</sup> Here follows a repetition of the paragraph on page 23 beginning, 'Let homesteads of five roods be planted with mulberry.'



## HE CHANGED THE SUBJECT

to the care of a friend while he went on a journey to the Ch'u State ; and if, on his return, he found that they had been allowed to suffer from cold and hunger, what should he do to that friend ?—He should cast him off, replied the King.—If your Chancellor was incapable of controlling the officers under him, how would you deal with him ?—I should get rid of him.—And if there is no orderly government in your kingdom from end to end, what then ?—But at this question the King turned away to his entourage and changed the subject.

\* \* \*

At an interview with King Hsüan of Ch'i, Mencius said : When we speak of an ancient kingdom, we do not mean one with tall trees growing in it, but one possessing a long line of trusted ministers. Your Majesty has no intimate ministers at all. Those you appoint one day are gone the next, and you are none the wiser.—The King said : How am I to know and get rid of the incompetent ones ?—Mencius replied : The ruler of a State promotes men of worth only when he needs must. Should he not be cautious when he has to displace the high by the humble, kinsfolk by strangers ?

When all those about you approve of a man's worth, that is not enough to go upon. When all the great officers follow suit, that is still not enough. But when all his countrymen approve of him, then look into the matter ; and if you find him worthy, you may employ him. On the other hand, when all those about you say a man is unsatisfactory, do not listen to them ; when all the great officers say the same, do not

## A VILE CREATURE CALLED CHOU

listen. But when all his countrymen say he is unsatisfactory, then look into the matter ; and if you find he is really unsatisfactory, you may get rid of him. When those about you say a man should be put to death, take no notice ; when all the great officers say he should be put to death, take no notice. But when all his countrymen say the same thing, then look into the matter, and if you find he deserves death, you may execute him. Hence the saying : ' He dies at the hands of his own countrymen.' Only in this way can you approve yourself the father and mother of your people.

\* \* \*

King Hsüan of Ch'ï asked : Is it not true that T'ang drove away Chieh and that King Wu smote Chou?—Mencius replied : It is so stated in the records.—May a subject, then, slay his sovereign?—Mencius said : One who outrages humanity is called a ruffian ; one who outrages the moral sense is called a wretch. A man of this sort may be termed a vile creature. I have heard that King Wu put to death a vile creature called Chou ; I have never heard that he slew his sovereign.

\* \* \*

The men of Ch'ï attacked Yen and conquered it. King Hsüan then asked Mencius, saying : Some urge me to annex the country, others tell me not to. For a kingdom of ten thousand chariots to overwhelm another kingdom of like size within fifty days is something so miraculous that, if I do

not annex it, Heaven's displeasure will surely overtake me. Had I not better do so?—Mencius replied: Yes, if your doing so will please the people of Yen. Among the ancients, one who acted on these lines was King Wu. But if it will not please the people, then I say no. Among the ancients, one who acted on these lines was King Wên.<sup>1</sup> When a kingdom of ten thousand chariots smites another of equal size, and the inhabitants welcome your army with food and refreshment, it can only be because they are anxious to escape from the fire and flood of their own government. But once they find that you are only making the fire fiercer and the flood deeper, they will rebel against you in your turn.

\*   \*   \*

The people of Ch'i, having smitten Yen, took possession of the country. Thereupon the other princes of the Empire began to make plans for liberating Yen. King Hsian said: The princes are planning to attack me: how shall I cope with them?—Mencius replied: I have heard of one with a territory of only seventy *li* ruling the Empire. That was T'ang. But never have I heard of the lord of a thousand *li* having cause to fear others. It is written in the Histories: 'T'ang set about his work of punishment, and began with Ko. The whole Empire trusted him. He carried his campaign to the east, and the tribes in the west were impatient; he marched south, and the tribes to the north were impatient: Why does

<sup>1</sup> King Wên denounced the cruelties of the Shang emperor Chou Hsin, but left the final extinction of the dynasty to his son King Wu.

he put us last? they said." The people looked for his coming as they would look for a rain-cloud in time of drought. Markets were frequented as usual, husbandmen continued to drive the plough. He put the rulers to death, but was tender to their subjects, like gentle rain falling in due season; and all the people were overjoyed.

Further it is said in the Histories: 'We have waited for our lord. He comes, and we live again.' The ruler of Yen was cruel to his people, so your Majesty went and punished him; and the people felt that you were delivering them as from fire and flood. They went forth to welcome your army with food and refreshment. But now you are slaying their fathers and elder brothers, you are imprisoning their sons and younger brothers. You are destroying their ancestral shrines and taking away the sacred vessels. How can this be justified? The Empire cannot but fear the high-handedness of Ch'ï. By doubling your territory without the accompaniment of benevolent rule you have set in motion the forces of the Empire. Let your Majesty give speedy orders that all captives, old and young, be sent back, and that the sacred vessels be left undisturbed. Hold parley with the people of Yen, set up a new ruler, and then withdraw. Thus you may still succeed in averting trouble.

\* \* \*

After a skirmish between the armies of Tsou and Lu, Duke Mu of Tsou said to Mencius: I have lost thirty-three of my officers, but not one of the common soldiers died with them.

## PAID BACK IN THEIR OWN COIN

I cannot very well put them all to death by way of punishment ; yet, if I do not put them to death, it will encourage them to look grimly on while their leaders are being killed, without trying to save them. What is the best thing for me to do ?— Mencius replied : In years of bad harvests and famine your Highness loses nigh upon a thousand of your subjects : the aged and the feeble roll into ditches and pools, while the able-bodied are scattered in every direction. Yet no officer reports this state of things, and all the while your granaries and store-houses are full to bursting. It is a case of negligence from above which means ruin to those below. What did Tsêng Tzū say ?—‘ Beware, beware ! your actions will recoil on your own head.’ If your people have now at last been able to pay those officers back in their own coin, you must not blame them. Rule with benevolence, my Lord ! Then your people will be attached to those above them and ready to give their lives for their officers.

\* \* \*

Duke Wên of T'êng asked, saying : T'êng is only a small State, lying between Ch'i and Ch'u. To which of those two kingdoms should I pay homage ?—Mencius replied : That is a question of policy which I am not qualified to answer. But if you insist, here is one piece of advice. Dig your moats deep, build your walls high, and guard them along with your people. Be ready to sacrifice your own life, and your people will never desert you. So much at any rate you can do.

\* \* \*



## A POLICY OF APPEASEMENT

Duke Wên of T'êng asked, saying : T'êng is a small country. Though I show the utmost deference to the great States around me, we cannot escape aggression. What is the best thing for me to do ?—Mencius replied : Of old, when Prince T'ai dwelt in Pin, his country was invaded by northern tribes. He tried to placate them with furs and silks, then with horses and hounds, then with gems and jade, but all was of no avail. So he called an assembly of elders and spoke to them thus : ' What these barbarians want is our land. Now, I have learned that a princely man does not bring ruin upon his subjects for the sake of that which should support them. My children, it will be better for you to have no prince. I will go away from here.' Accordingly he left Pin, crossed the Liang hills, and settled at the foot of Mount Ch'i. The people of Pin said to themselves : ' This is a good man. We must not lose him ' ; and crowds streamed after him like men going to market.

On the other hand, some might say : ' Yours is a heritage from the past, not to be disposed of by any one person. Stay on, and defend it to the death.' Your Highness must choose between these two alternatives.

## II

KUNG-SUN CH'OU<sup>1</sup> asked, saying : If, Sir, you were appointed Chancellor of the Ch'i State, you would be able to put your principles into practice ; and it would not be at all surprising if you thereby succeeded in obtaining the hegemony,<sup>2</sup> or the royal dignity itself, for your prince. In such circumstances, would you feel agitated in mind ?—No, replied Mencius ; by the age of forty<sup>3</sup> I had achieved imperturbability of mind. In that case, you are far superior to Mêng Pên.<sup>4</sup>—It is not hard to acquire. The philosopher Kao<sup>5</sup> achieved the same result before I did. Is there any special method of acquiring it ?—Oh, yes. Pei-kung Yu trained himself in physical courage so as not to flinch from a blow or to relax the steadiness of his gaze. He would resent the slightest push from anybody as fiercely as a thrashing in the market-place ; he would not stomach an insult either from a coarsely clad man of the people or from a lord of ten thousand chariots. When

<sup>1</sup> A native of Ch'i, and one of the four principal disciples of Mencius.

<sup>2</sup> Such as was usurped during the seventh century B.C. by five feudal princes who in turn became the virtual dictators of China.

<sup>3</sup> Confucius at the same age claimed to have been 'free from delusions'.

<sup>4</sup> A famous swashbuckler of the Ch'i State.

<sup>5</sup> A contemporary of Mencius, whose views are contested below (see pages 91-95).

it came to stabbing, prince and pauper were all the same to him. He stood in no awe of the feudal princes, and if an abusive word was addressed to him, he would be sure to retort.

Mêng Shih-shê had another method of fostering his courage. He used to say : ' I care not whether I win or lose. One who weighs up the enemy before he advances, and plans for victory before he joins battle, is in reality afraid of the army he is fighting. How can I make certain of victory ? All I can do is to have no fear.' Mêng Shih-shê was like Tsêng Tzū,<sup>1</sup> and Pei-kung Yu was like Tzū Hsia.<sup>1</sup> Which of the two was the more courageous I do not know, but Mêng Shih-shê held to the essential point. Tsêng Tzū once said to his disciple Tzū Hsiang : ' Do you admire courage ? On the subject of courage in its highest form I once heard our Master say : If on self-examination I find that I am not in the right, shall I not be afraid even of the humblest yokel ? But if I find that I am in the right, I will face the enemy in his thousands and tens of thousands.' After all, Mêng Shih-shê's hold on his spirit<sup>2</sup> was not so good as Tsêng Tzū's hold on the essential point.

May I ask, Sir, said Kung-sun Ch'ou, what your imperturbability consists in, as compared with that of the philosopher Kao ?—Kao Tzū says : ' What cannot be put into words must not be looked for in the mind ; what cannot be found

<sup>1</sup> A prominent disciple of Confucius.

<sup>2</sup> Here and in the following passage the word ' spirit ' is to be taken in its more material sense of animal vigour or vital force.

## DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRIT

in the mind must not be looked for in the spirit.' The latter half of this dictum, 'what cannot be found in the mind must not be looked for in the spirit', may stand; but the other half, 'what cannot be put into words must not be looked for in the mind', is to be rejected. For the will is captain over the spirit, which is an element informing the physical body. The will is supreme, and the spirit is subordinate to it. Therefore I say: Keep the will erect, and do not coerce the spirit.—Since you say, the will is supreme and the spirit subordinate to it, why do you also say, keep the will erect, and do not coerce the spirit?—If the will, replied Mencius, is concentrated on one object, it will move the spirit in that direction. If the spirit is similarly concentrated, it will also tend to disturb the will. For instance, running or jumping is an impulse of the spirit, but it also tends to react upon the mind.—May I ask, Sir, in what respect you have the better of Kao?—Mencius replied: I know how to interpret words, and I have learnt to feed my spirit so that it develops into something vast and sublime.—May I ask what you mean by a spirit that is vast and sublime?—It is hard to explain. Spirit is of its nature both great and resolute to a high degree. If properly nourished and protected from injury, it is commensurate with the universe itself. Spirit has natural affinities to the moral sense and right principle; without these it languishes. It proceeds from an accumulation of righteous acts, and is not to be snatched from sudden onsets of conscience. Acts that do not content the mind starve the spirit. Therefore I say that Kao has never under-

stood the nature of righteousness, because he takes it to be something external.

When difficulties arise, as they certainly will, they should not be straightened out at once; for the mind must not forget what the spirit is, or try to assist its natural growth. Be not like the man of Sung. He was much distressed because his corn would not grow, so he pulled the shoots out, and then, plodding homewards, said to his family: 'How tired I feel to-day! I have been helping the corn to grow.' His son rushed off to see what he had done, and found that the crops were all withered. There are few indeed in this world who do not help their corn to grow. Those who think it useless to feed their spirit and simply let it alone are as it were neglecting to weed their crops. But those who try to assist the growth of their spirit are pulling their crops up by the roots: not only no benefit, but positive harm results.—And what do you mean by 'knowing how to interpret words'?—Under biased words I can see what is concealed. Under intemperate words I can perceive the snare. I can see how evil words are intended to lead astray, and how evasive words show emptiness within. Springing up in the mind, these things work harm in the government; finding vent in the government, they spread their mischief through all sorts of affairs. If an inspired Sage should again arise, he will surely follow these words of mine.

Tsai Wo and Tzū Kung<sup>1</sup> excelled in dialectic. Jan Niu,

<sup>1</sup> Disciples of Confucius.



Min Tzū and Yen Yüan<sup>1</sup> excelled in the discussion of virtuous conduct. Confucius united both excellences, although he declared that he had no skill in dialectic.—It appears then, Sir, that you are already an inspired Sage?—How now! said Mencius, what words are these? Once upon a time Tzū Kung asked Confucius, saying: 'Master, are you not an inspired Sage?' Confucius replied: 'To the title of Sage I can lay no claim. But I study virtue without surfeit, and never weary of teaching others.' Tzū Kung rejoined: 'To study virtue without surfeit is wisdom. To teach without wearying of the task is benevolence. Being benevolent and wise, our Master is really a Sage.' Now, if Confucius himself would not accept the designation of Sage, what words are these that you have spoken?—Kung-sun Ch'ou went on: Formerly I was given to understand that Tzū Hsia, Tzū Yu, and Tzū Chang<sup>1</sup> each possessed one of the distinguishing marks of a Sage, while Jan Niu, Min Tzū and Yen Yüan had them all, though on a small scale. May I ask where you would place yourself in relation to these men?—Mencius replied: Let us drop this subject, if you please.

What is your opinion, then, of Po I<sup>2</sup> and I Yin?<sup>3</sup>—Their principles were not the same, said Mencius. Po I would serve

<sup>1</sup> Disciples of Confucius.

<sup>2</sup> Po I and his brother Shu Ch'i distinguished themselves by their quixotic loyalty to the Shang dynasty after its overthrow in the twelfth century B.C. (See also page 50.)

<sup>3</sup> The wise and capable minister of T'ang 'the Completer', who founded the Shang dynasty.

none except his lawful prince, nor would he rule over people that were not his by right. When order prevailed he took office. When anarchy came he retired into private life. I Yin, on the other hand, would say : 'Whomsoever I serve is my prince ; whomsoever I rule are my people.' And he held office in times of order and anarchy alike. To hold office or resign it as conscience dictated, to remain in a country just so long as it was right, and to withdraw promptly when circumstances demanded it :—such was the way of Confucius. These were all Sages of the past. I cannot put my conduct on a par with theirs, but I do wish to model myself on Confucius.—Are Po I and I Yin, then, on the same plane as Confucius?—No, replied Mencius. From the creation of mankind until now, there has never been another Confucius.—But have they not points in common?—Yes. Set to rule over a small country of not more than a hundred *li*, they would all have been able to attract the other feudal lords to their court and thus obtain the imperial throne. But had the throne been obtainable at the price of a single unrighteous deed, or by shedding a single drop of innocent blood, not one of them would have done it. This much they had in common.

And now would you tell me in what they differed from him?—Tsai Wo, Tzū Kung and Yu Jo, said Mencius, were wise enough to recognise a Sage when they saw him ; and in any case they would not have stooped to flatter one whom they loved. Well, Tsai Wo said : ' So far as my own observation goes, Confucius is far superior to Yao and Shun.'

## NONE SO GREAT AS CONFUCIUS

Tzū Kung said : ' By studying the ritual of ancient sovereigns one can appraise the quality of their government ; by listening to their music one can form an estimate of their character. Thus, a hundred generations after their time, we can rank the monarchs of bygone ages according to their merits : none can escape our scrutiny. And, from the creation of mankind until now, there has never been another like Confucius.' Yu Jo said : ' Why speak only of the human race ? The unicorn is one of the beasts of the field, the phoenix one of the birds of the air. Mount T'ai is the same in kind as mounds and hillocks, the Yellow River and the Ocean itself the same in kind as puddles on the road. The Sage and the common people are also of a kind. But the Sage stands out amongst his kind : he towers above the multitude. And, from the creation of mankind until now, there has been no Sage so great as Confucius.'

\* \* \*

Mencius said : He is a tyrant who uses force while making a show of benevolence. To be a tyrant, one must have a large kingdom at one's command. He is a true king who practises benevolence in a virtuous spirit. To be a true king, one need not wait for a large kingdom. T'ang ruled over seventy square *li*, and King Wên over a hundred. When men are subdued by force, it is not their hearts that are won but their strength that gives out. When men are won by goodness, their hearts are glad within them and their submission is sincere. Thus were the seventy disciples of Confucius

FROM THE BOOK OF SONGS

won by their Master. This is what is meant in the *Book of Songs* where it says : ' From east and west, from north and south, came no thought but of surrender.'<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Benevolence brings honour, without it comes disgrace. To hate disgrace and yet to be content to live without benevolence is like hating damp and yet living in a hollow. If a ruler hates disgrace, his best way is to prize virtue and do honour to the scholar. With worthy men in high places and able men in office, his country may enjoy a season of peace and quiet ; and if he uses this opportunity to clarify law and government, even a great kingdom will be wary of him. It is said in the *Book of Songs* :

' Ere that the rain-clouds gathered,  
I took the bark of the mulberry tree  
And wove it into window and door.<sup>2</sup>  
Now, ye people below,  
Which of you will dare to affront me ?

Confucius said of the maker of this ode that he knew the principles of statecraft ; for who will dare to affront a ruler that can order his kingdom well ? But, now that the State is enjoying a season of quiet, to use the opportunity for junketing and idle amusement is nothing less than seeking out misfortune. Happiness and misfortune are indeed always

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the campaign of King Wu.

<sup>2</sup> A bird is speaking of its nest.

## HOW TO PLEASE ALL

of man's own seeking. That is the lesson conveyed in the *Book of Songs* :

Ever adjust thyself to the will of Heaven,  
And great happiness will be thine ;

and in the *T'ai Chia* :<sup>1</sup> 'Heaven-sent calamities you may stand up against, but you cannot survive those brought on by yourself.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : If a prince honours the wise and employs the able, so that men of light and leading are in power, then the scholars of the Empire will all be pleased, and anxious to attend his Court. If he levies ground-rent on the stalls in the market-place but refrains from taxing goods, or if he contents himself with keeping order and levies no ground-rent, then the traders of the Empire will all be pleased, and anxious to stall their goods in his market-place. If at his frontier stations merchandise is only examined and not burdened with duties, then the bagmen of the Empire will all be pleased, and anxious to frequent his highways. If ploughmen have to help on the public fields<sup>2</sup> but are not otherwise taxed, then the farmers of the Empire will all

<sup>1</sup> A section of the *Book of History*.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the nine-square system, which Mencius describes elsewhere : ' A square *li* is divided into nine smaller squares, containing nine hundred roods in all. The central square is public land, and is cultivated jointly by eight families, each of which has a hundred roods of its own.'



## SYMPATHY FOR ONE'S FELLOWS

be pleased, and anxious to cultivate his waste lands. If from tradespeople he does not exact individual or village contributions, then all the inhabitants of the Empire will be pleased, and anxious to become his subjects. If he is truly able to walk in these five ways, the people of neighbouring kingdoms will look up to him as to a father and mother. And from the beginning of the race until now, no man that seduced children to attack their fathers and mothers has succeeded in his enterprise. That being so, such a prince has no enemies in the Empire, and is the very minister of God, who must eventually, according to all experience, attain full sovereignty.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : All men have a certain sympathy towards their fellows. The great monarchs of old had this human sympathy, and it resulted in their government being sympathetic. Having this feeling of sympathy for his fellows, he who acts upon it in governing the Empire will find that his rule can be conducted as it were in the palm of his hand. What I mean by this feeling of sympathy which all men possess is this : If anyone were to see a child falling into a well, he would have a feeling of horror and pity, not because he happened to be an intimate friend of the child's parents, nor because he sought the approbation of his neighbours and friends, nor yet because he feared to be thought inhumane. Looking at the matter in the light of this example, we may say that no man is devoid of a feeling of compassion, nor of a feeling of shame, nor of a feeling of consideration for others,

#### FOUR ELEMENTS IN MAN

nor of a feeling of plain right and wrong. The feeling of compassion is the origin of benevolence ; the feeling of shame is the origin of righteousness ; the feeling of consideration for others is the origin of good manners ; the feeling of right and wrong is the origin of wisdom. The presence of these four elements in man is as natural to him as the possession of his four limbs. Having these four elements within him, the man who says he is powerless to act as he should is doing a grave injury to himself. And the man who says the same of his prince is likewise doing him a grave injury. Let a man but know how to expand and develop these four elements existing in the soul, and his progress becomes as irresistible as a newly kindled fire or a spring that has just burst from the ground. If they can be fully developed, these virtues are strong enough to safeguard all within the Four Seas ; if allowed to remain undeveloped, they will not suffice for the service due to one's parents.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Po I would serve no other than his rightful sovereign, and would consort with no other friends than those he could rightly regard as such. He would not stand in the Court of a wicked prince, nor hold converse with any wicked person. For him, such acts were like sitting in the mire when wearing court robes and hat. He carried his dislike of what was incorrect so far that, if standing with a fellow townsman whose hat happened to be awry, he would move away without turning his head, as though in danger

of contamination. So, too, when feudal princes came to seek him out, however particular they might be in wording their invitations, he would never accept them, thinking it would be improper for him to go.

Hui of Liu-hsia,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, felt no shame in serving a vicious sovereign, nor did he think it beneath his dignity to hold a small post. On taking office, he did not attempt to conceal his high principles, but insisted on following the path of rectitude. When left out of office, he showed no resentment, and when straitened by poverty he did not worry. He was wont to say: 'You are you, and I am I; if you choose to stand at my side with bare arms or naked body, how can that contaminate me?' And so he cheerfully associated with all and sundry, but was never untrue to himself. When pressed to remain in a country, he would do so on the ground that it would be improper for him to leave it.

Mencius then went on to say: Po I was narrow-minded; Hui of Liu-hsia was wanting in dignity. Both of these faults will be shunned by the princely type of man.

\* \* \*

Mencius said: In war, the seasons of Heaven are of less avail than the advantages derived from Earth,<sup>2</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> Hui is the posthumous title of Chan Huo, a famous governor of the Liu-hsia district in the Lu State, who is mentioned more than once in the Confucian Analects.

<sup>2</sup> Heaven, Earth, and Man are the 'Three Powers of Nature' in Chinese cosmogony. We gather from what follows that the 'advan-

advantages derived from Earth are of less avail than harmony amongst Men. Take the case of a city not more than three *li* in extent, or seven *li* including the outworks, which is invested and assaulted, but cannot be overcome. In order to invest and assault it, the enemy must have turned to account the seasons of Heaven ; but his failing to overcome it shows that the seasons of Heaven were of less avail than the advantages derived from Earth.

Now suppose that a city has been surrendered and forsaken, though not because the walls were not high enough or the moats not deep enough, nor because the weapons were too blunt and the armour too weak, nor yet because there was a shortage of rice and corn. This would mean that the advantages derived from Earth were of less avail than harmony amongst Men.

Hence the saying : ' A people is hedged in not merely by dykes along the frontiers ; a State is protected not merely by the natural obstacles of hill and stream ; the Empire is kept in awe not merely by sharp swords and armour.' He whose government is based on right principle will find many helpers ; he whose government is unprincipled will find but few. In the latter case, even his own kith and kin will at last revolt against him ; in the former case, the whole Empire will in the end espouse his cause.

Advantages derived from Earth ' comprise walls, moats, and other material aids to a campaign. The ' Seasons of Heaven ' are not specified, but the term is probably more comprehensive than Legge's ' opportunities of time vouchsafed by Heaven ', and may include all varieties of weather as well as times and seasons.

## ACCEPTING GIFTS

With the Empire at his back, and attacking one against whom his own kinsmen revolt, the nobler type of prince may not find it necessary to fight at all ; but if he has to fight, he will surely conquer.

\* \* \*

Ch'ên Chên asked Mencius, saying : Formerly, when you were in Ch'i, the King sent you a hundred ounces of fine gold, which you would not accept. Yet afterwards, in Sung, you accepted a gift of seventy ounces of gold, and in Hsieh you accepted one of fifty ounces. If you were right in refusing a gift the first time, you must have been wrong in accepting it on the other occasions ; or, if you were right then, you must have been wrong previously. How can you escape this dilemma, Sir ?—Mencius replied : In all three cases I was right. When I was in Sung, I had a long journey to make. A traveller must be provided with money ; so that when they came to me, saying : ' Here is a present of money for your journey,' why should I have refused ? When I was in Hsieh, I had reason to fear attack ; so that when they said : ' We hear that you have to be on your guard, and are therefore offering you money for soldiers,' why should I have refused ? But when I was in Ch'i, I had no need of money. To give money when there is no need for it is equivalent to offering a bribe. And what gentleman would let himself be won over by a bribe ?

\* \* \*



## DESERTING ONE'S POST

Mencius went to P'ing-lu<sup>1</sup> and said to the governor, K'ung Chü-hsin : If one of your spearmen, Sir, deserted his post three times in one day, would you not get rid of him ?—I should not wait for him to do it thrice, was the reply.—Indeed ? And yet you too, Sir, have deserted your post many times over. During the years of bad harvests and famine which have afflicted your people, the old and the feeble simply rolled into ditches, while the able-bodied scattered and migrated in all directions—several thousands of them.—The Governor replied : There was nothing I could do to prevent it.—Mencius went on : Suppose someone takes charge of another man's flocks and herds in order to pasture them, he will have to search for grazing grounds. If he cannot find any, ought he to return the animals to their owner or simply stand by and see them perish ?—The Governor then said : I admit I am to blame in this.—The next day Mencius had an audience with the King and said : Of your Majesty's governors I know five, but K'ung Chü-hsin is the only one who knows his own faults.—He then told the King what had passed, and the King said : I myself was the guilty one.

\* \* \*

Shên T'ung privately consulted Mencius saying : Ought Yen to be smitten ?—Mencius replied : Yes. Tzū-k'uai had no right to give Yen away to another man, and Tzū-chih had

<sup>1</sup> A city in the Ch'i State.

no right to take Yen from Tzū-k'uai.<sup>1</sup> Suppose you, without telling the King, secretly made over your salary and your rank to an officer whom you liked, and that he accepted them, also without the King's sanction : would such a proceeding be right ? And wherein would it differ from the present case ?

The men of Ch'i smote Yen. Somebody asked Mencius if he had actually urged them to do so, and he replied : No. Shên T'ung asked if Yen might be smitten, and I told him that it might. Accordingly they went and smote it. Had he asked me who should be the one to smite Yen, I would have said that God's deputy should do the work. If asked whether a murderer ought to be put to death, I would answer, Yes. If asked who should do it, I would say, the Minister of Justice. But that one Yen should be smitten by another Yen : <sup>2</sup> how could I ever urge such a thing ?

\* \* \*

When the people of Yen rebelled, the King of Ch'i said : I am deeply ashamed when I think of Mencius.<sup>3</sup>—Ch'ên Chia<sup>4</sup> said to him : Your Majesty must not take this to heart. Do you consider yourself equal to the Duke of Chou in wisdom and benevolence ?—How can you ask such a question ? said the King.—Well, the Duke of Chou made

<sup>1</sup> Tzū-k'uai was a weak ruler who resigned in favour of his minister Tzū-chih. Later on, his son tried to regain the throne, with disastrous results to the people. Shên T'ung appears to have been a minister in the Ch'i State.

<sup>2</sup> Mencius calls Ch'i another Yen because its government turned out to be as harsh and oppressive as that of Yen itself. (See page 37.)

<sup>3</sup> Whose advice he had not followed.

<sup>4</sup> An officer of Ch'i.

## A NATURAL MISTAKE

Kuan-shu superintendent of Yin,<sup>1</sup> and Kuan-shu led the State into rebellion. If he knew that he was going to act thus when he appointed him, it was not benevolent. If he did not know, it was not wise. If even the Duke of Chou was not wholly benevolent or wise, how can one expect your Majesty to be so? With your permission I will see Mencius and get his opinion.—Accordingly he went to see Mencius and asked: What kind of man was the Duke of Chou?—A Sage of the olden time.—He made Kuan-shu superintendent of Yin, did he not, and Kuan-shu led Yin into rebellion?—Yes.—Did the Duke of Chou know that he would rebel when he appointed him?—No, he did not.—Then even a Sage may make mistakes?—The Duke of Chou, replied Mencius, was Kuan-shu's younger brother: was not his mistake a very natural one? Moreover, the princely man of old would always rectify any mistakes he made, whereas the princes of to-day allow their mistakes to stand. The mistakes of a princely man of old were like eclipses of the sun and moon: they were beheld of all the people, and when the light came back, they looked up to it with admiration. The princes of to-day not only allow their mistakes to stand but go further and try to excuse them.

\* \* \*

When Mencius had left Ch'i, Yin Shih<sup>2</sup> said to his friends:

<sup>1</sup> After the fall of the Shang dynasty, the small State from which it derived its later name of Yin was given to the son of its last monarch, but as a measure of precaution Kuan-shu and another brother of the new Chou emperor were sent to keep an eye on the government.

<sup>2</sup> Presumably a Ch'i statesman, but nothing is known about him.

## WHY MENCIUS LEFT CH' I

If he did not know that our King was incapable of becoming a T'ang or a Wu, he was lacking in intelligence. If, knowing it, he came hither nevertheless, he was seeking for favours. He travelled a thousand *li* to see the King, and when he found that they could not agree, he went away again. But he spent three nights in Chou before he departed for good. Why hesitate thus? Such conduct displeases me.—The disciple Kao reported his words to Mencius, who said: How little Yin Shih knows me! I travelled a thousand *li* to see the King because I wanted to come. But, when I was disappointed in him, does he suppose that I wanted to leave? No; I simply had no choice. As to my spending three nights in Chou before departing, I thought even then that I might be acting too hastily, and that the King might change his mind, in which case he would recall me. Only when I had left the country and he had not sent after me did I feel absolutely bent on returning home. Even so, I cannot be said to have given up the King entirely. He may still be brought to do good, and if he were willing to employ me, it would be for the happiness, not only of the people of Ch'i, but of the whole Empire. I am daily hoping that the King may change his mind. Am I like those petty-minded persons who rebuke their sovereign, and when their words are not heeded, fly into a rage which they take no trouble to conceal, and then make off, travelling a whole day's journey before they stop for the night? When this explanation came to Yin Shih's ears he said: I am a petty-minded man indeed.

### III

A CERTAIN Hsü Hsing, who professed to follow the teaching of Shên Nung,<sup>1</sup> came from Ch'u to T'êng, and taking his stand at Duke Wên's gate addressed him thus: 'I, a man from afar, have heard that your Highness is a benevolent ruler. I wish to have some land allotted to me and become your subject.' So the Duke gave him a place to live in. His disciples, numbering thirty or forty, were all clad in rough serge, and wove mats or plaited sandals for a living.

There also came from Sung to T'êng one Ch'ên Hsiang, a disciple of Ch'ên Liang, with his younger brother Hsin, bearing ploughs and ploughshares on their backs. He said: 'We have heard that your Highness is governing on the lines laid down by the Sages, which shows that you yourself are a Sage. We wish to become the subjects of such a one.' On meeting Hsü Hsing, Ch'ên Hsiang was delighted and, casting aside what he had previously learned, began to study under him. He had an interview with Mencius at which he repeated the following words of Hsü Hsing: 'The Prince of T'êng is indeed a worthy prince, but he has not yet made himself acquainted with the True Path. The wise ruler labours in the fields with his people and eats the fruit of his

<sup>1</sup> The 'Divine Husbandman', a legendary emperor.



own labour ; he prepares his own meals, morning and evening, while carrying on the work of government. But T'êng possesses barns and granaries and storehouses, which means doing harm to the people in order to supply his own needs. Can that be considered wise ?'

Mencius said : Master Hsü, I presume, is nourished by the grain which he himself has sown. Is that so ?—That is so.—And his garments are made of cloth that he himself has woven ?—No ; Hsü Hsing wears rough serge.—Does he wear a cap ?—Yes.—What sort of cap ?—A plain silk cap.—Which he has woven himself, I suppose.—No ; he got it in exchange for some grain.—Why did he not weave it himself ?—It would have interfered with his farming.—Does Hsü use pots of metal and earthenware for cooking, and iron implements for tilling the ground ?—Yes.—Does he make them himself ?—No, he gets them in exchange for grain.—Well, his getting these articles in exchange for grain does no harm to the potter or to the blacksmith, and they in their turn, by getting grain in exchange for their own manufactures, are surely doing no harm to the husbandman. But why does not Hsü himself act as potter and blacksmith, supplying his needs with articles made on his own premises ? Why this multifarious dealing with all sorts of craftsmen ? How is it that Hsü does not spare himself this trouble ?—Why, the business of farming cannot possibly be carried on simultaneously with a number of other trades.—Is it only the administration of the Empire, then, that can be combined with the business of farming ? No ; men of high and low

## INUNDATION OF THE EMPIRE

station alike have their own proper business, and any one man has to be supplied with the products of other men's industry. If he had to manufacture them all for his own use, everybody in the Empire would be turned out upon the roads. Hence the saying : ' Some toil with their minds, others toil with their bodies. Those that toil with their minds govern others, those that toil with their bodies are governed by others. Those who are governed feed their fellows, those who govern are fed by their fellows.' This principle is world-wide in its application.

In the time of Yao, before the world had been reduced to order, mighty rivers flowed out of their channels and inundated the Empire. Rank vegetation covered the face of the earth, and wild animals multiplied apace. The five kinds of grain could not be grown, and men were hard pushed by bird and beast, whose tracks ran criss-cross throughout the Middle Kingdom. To Yao this state of things was a source of special grief, and he appointed Shun to cope with the disorder. Shun set Yih to superintend the use of fire, and Yih then burned away the undergrowth of mountain and marsh, so that birds and beasts were obliged to flee for cover. Yü it was who kept the nine streams asunder, scoured the beds of the Chi and the T'a, and made them flow into the sea. He opened a passage for the Ju and the Han, determined the course of the Huai and the Ssü, and led them all into the Great River.<sup>1</sup> Thus he enabled the people of the

<sup>1</sup> Mencius's geography seems to be at fault. Actually, of these four rivers only the Han flows into the Yangtse.

## INSTRUCTING THE PEOPLE

Middle Kingdom to obtain food. At that time Yü spent eight years away from home : thrice he passed his own door and did not enter. Even if he had wished to till the soil, could he have done so ? Hou Chi<sup>1</sup> taught the people to sow and to reap, to plant and to cultivate the five kinds of grain ; and when the grain ripened, the people found sustenance.

Now, men have a moral nature ; but if they live comfortably with plenty of food and warm clothing, and receive no teaching, they sink almost to the level of brutes. This caused anxiety to the Sage Shun, and he appointed Hsieh to be Minister of Instruction in order that he might teach the human relationships : the affection that should exist between father and son ; the righteousness that acts as a bond between sovereign and subject ; the division of duties between husband and wife ; the rules of precedence between old and young ; and mutual fidelity between friends. The Highly Meritorious One<sup>2</sup> exhorted his minister to reward the people and lead them on, to correct and improve them, to aid and protect them, to help them to be independent, and finally to stimulate them to virtue. While the Sage was thus solicitous about the people, could he find leisure to till the soil ? The anxiety felt by Yao was that he might not find a Shun ; the anxiety felt by Shun was that he might not find a Yü or a Kao Yao ;<sup>3</sup> but a husbandman

<sup>1</sup> Director of Husbandry under Yao.

<sup>2</sup> An epithet applied to Yao in the *Book of History*.

<sup>3</sup> Minister of Justice under Shun.

is one whose anxiety is confined to the cultivation of his hundred roods.

There is charitableness in sharing wealth with others, conscientiousness in teaching others what is good, benevolence in obtaining men for the service of the Empire. It is easier to give the Empire away to another than to find men who will serve the Empire.

Confucius said: 'How great a sovereign was Yao! Heaven alone is truly great, but Yao alone could make Heaven his model. How vast his stature! The people could find no words for such a man. Princely indeed was Shun! Majestically he presided over the Empire, yet it seemed nothing to him.' In their ordering of the Empire both Yao and Shun assuredly had wherewithal to occupy their minds, albeit their minds were not occupied with husbandry.

I have heard of barbarians being converted to the institutions of Hsia,<sup>1</sup> but never of men being converted by barbarians. Ch'en Liang was a native of Ch'u. Pleased with the doctrines of the Duke of Chou and Confucius, he came north to study in the Middle Kingdom, and of the northern scholars there was none, perhaps, who excelled him. He was what you may call a scholar cast in heroic mould. You and your brother followed him for thirty years or more, but when your Master died you promptly turned your back on him.

Long ago, when three years had elapsed after the death of Confucius, his disciples packed their baggage and prepared to return home. First, however, they went in to take leave of

<sup>1</sup> A name for China, derived from its first dynasty.

Tzū Kung<sup>1</sup> and all wailed in unison until they lost their voices. Then they returned to their homes, but Tzū Kung went back and built himself a hut within the burial-ground, where he dwelt alone for three years before going home. Another time, Tzū Hsia, Tzū Chang and Tzū Yu, thinking that Yu Jo resembled the departed Sage, wished to do him formal service even as they had served Confucius. They urged Tsêng Tzū to do the like, but he said: 'No. What has been washed in the Great River and the Han, and bleached in the autumn sun, is so dazzlingly white that it cannot be made whiter.'

Now here is this southerner, a man with the tongue of a shrike, whose Way is not that of our ancient Kings. Unlike Tsêng Tzū, you have turned away from your own Master, and made yourself his disciple. I have heard of birds winging their way out of dark valleys to perch on the tree-tops, but not of their leaving the tree-tops to descend into dark valleys. It is said in the Eulogies of Lu: 'They have given battle to the Jung and Ti tribes, they have dealt out punishment to Ching and to Shu.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Duke of Chou would give battle to those whose disciple you have become. The change you have made is not for the better.

Ch'ên Hsiang said: If Hsti's doctrines were followed, there would be no two prices in the market, nor any fraud in the whole kingdom. A young boy might be sent to market,

<sup>1</sup> The disciple who had acted as master of the ceremonies.

<sup>2</sup> From the *Book of Songs*. Ching was another name for the great southern state of Ch'u, and Shu was in the same region.



and no one could cheat him. Pieces of cloth and silk of equal length would all be the same price ; bundles of hemp and floss silk of equal weight would be the same price ; equal quantities of the different kinds of grain would be the same price ; all shoes of the same size would be the same price.

Mencius replied : By their very nature things differ in quality : some are twice or five times, some are ten or a hundred times, some are a thousand or ten thousand times as valuable as others. By reducing them all to the same level you would bring confusion into the Empire. If big shoes are to cost the same as little shoes,<sup>1</sup> no one will manufacture them. If Hsü's teachings were adopted, they would induce people to practise deceit. How could a State be governed on those lines ?

\* \* \*

Ching Ch'un said to Mencius : How can it be contended that Kung-sun Yen and Chang I are not truly great men ? While they are angry, the feudal princes shiver with fear ; when they hold their peace, the flames in the Empire die down.—Mencius replied : How should that make them great men ? Have you not read the *Book of Rites* ?—' At the capping of a young man his father admonishes him. At the marriage of a young woman her mother admonishes her. Accompanying her to the door, she exhorts her thus : ' You are going to your new home, where you must be

<sup>1</sup> It will be noticed that Mencius misrepresents here what Ch'en Hsiang actually said.

## SUPPORT WITHOUT SERVICE

respectful, discreet, and submissive to your husband.'<sup>1</sup> Thus, to make a duty of obedience is the rule for wives and concubines. Dwelling in the spacious mansion of the world, occupying the correct position therein, and walking along its great highway; when he attains his ambition, using it for the good of the people; when he fails to attain it, pursuing the path of virtue all alone; not to be corrupted by riches and rank, nor deflected from principle by poverty and low condition, unbending in the face of threats and violence: such is the truly great man.

\* \* \*

P'êng Kêng<sup>2</sup> asked Mencius, saying: Is it not exceeding all measure to expect a prince to entertain a retinue numbering dozens of carriages and hundreds of attendants?—Mencius replied: Without justification, not so much as a bowl of rice should be accepted from another man; but with justification, even Shun's acceptance of the Empire from Yao cannot be regarded as exceeding all measure. Or do you so regard it?—No; but it does not seem right that a scholar should receive support without rendering any service.—Without an exchange of services and products, so that a deficiency in one quarter may be made good from a surplus in another, farmers would have a superfluity of corn, and women would

<sup>1</sup> The quotation does not seem very apposite. Mencius compares these itinerant politicians to women, whose chief duty is to be compliant. But what Ching Ch'in has stressed is not their sycophancy but their power to intimidate.

<sup>2</sup> A disciple of Mencius.

## PAY FOR WORK, NOT INTENTIONS

have a superfluity of cloth. By means of such an exchange, carpenters and carriage-makers may all derive support from you. Now here is a man, dutiful in his private and public life, who maintains the principles of the Sage Kings of old, all ready to be transmitted to the coming generation : is he to be denied your support ? Why should you hold a carpenter or carriage-maker in esteem while slighting the man who deals in benevolence and righteousness ?—P'êng Kêng said : The aim of the carpenter and the carriage-maker is to earn their living. Is it also the aim of the princely man to earn his living, by putting his principles into practice ?—Mencius replied : Sir, how does his aim affect you ? He renders you a service for which he deserves your support. Support him, therefore. Tell me this, too : Do you pay a man for his intentions or for his actual work ?—For his intentions.—Well, suppose you engage a plasterer who smashes your tiles and scribbles on the walls : his intention may be to earn his living, but will you give him any pay ?—No.—Then you do not pay a man for his intentions ; you pay him for his work.

\* \* \*

Tai Ying-chih<sup>1</sup> said to Mencius : Just at present I am unable to do away with frontier and market dues, and to restrict myself to the levying of a tithe ; but I propose to lighten these taxes, and in the coming year I will abolish them alto-

<sup>1</sup> A minister of Sung.

gether. What say you?—Mencius replied : There was once a man who stole one of his neighbour's fowls every day. Some one remonstrated with him, saying : ' This conduct does not befit a gentleman.'—' Very well,' said he, ' I will reduce the number and take only one fowl a month until next year, when I will put a stop to it.' If you know a thing to be wrong, you should stop doing it at once, and not wait until next year.

\* \* \*

The disciple Kung-tu said to Mencius : People outside our school all say that you are fond of disputing. May I venture to ask why?—Mencius replied : I am not really fond of disputing, but I cannot do otherwise. During the long ages that this empire has been in existence, periods of orderly government have alternated with periods of confusion. In the time of Yao, the rivers flowed out of their channels and floods swept over the Middle Kingdom. Serpents and dragons made it their abode, and nowhere could the people find safe foothold. In the lowlands they made nests in the trees, in the highlands they dug themselves caves. In the Histories it is said : ' The flood waters alarmed me ' :—this refers to the great inundation. Yü was appointed to cope with the peril. He scooped out new channels and drained the waters into the sea ; he drove the dragons and serpents away into the marshes, and the rivers flowed once more between their banks : these were the Great River, the Huai, the Yellow River, and the Han. After these

dangers and difficulties had been surmounted, and the beasts harmful to man had disappeared, the plains became fit for habitation and were re-occupied.

After the passing of Yao and Shun, the Way of the Sage fell into decay, and tyrants arose in their place who pulled down houses in order to make artificial lakes, so that people had nowhere to live in peace ; and turned fields into spacious pleasure-parks, so that the people could not obtain food and clothing. Evil words and cruel deeds became more common, parks, lakes, and marshlands more numerous, and wild beasts infested the country, until under the rule of Chou Hsin the Empire had gone back to a state of great disorder.

The Duke of Chou helped King Wu to exterminate Chou Hsin, smote the kingdom of Yen, and after three years put its ruler to death. He drove Fei-lien<sup>1</sup> to the sea-coast, where he hemmed him in and slew him. Fifty kingdoms did he destroy. He rid the land of tigers, leopards, rhinoceroses and elephants, and the whole Empire rejoiced. It is said in the Histories : ' Great and glorious were the plans of King Wên ! Greatly were they carried out by the ardour of King Wu ! Lacking naught in correctness, they may serve to help and instruct us of a later generation.'

Once more the world deteriorated and the Way dwindled. Evil words and cruel deeds were rampant, there were ministers who slew their sovereigns, there were sons who slew their fathers. Fearing the outcome, Confucius penned the 'Spring and Autumn'—records concerning the Sons of

<sup>1</sup> One of Chou Hsin's favourite ministers.



Heaven—about which he said : ‘ It is through the “ Spring and Autumn ” that I may be known, for the “ Spring and Autumn ” that I may be blamed.’

No sage kings have arisen, the feudal lords give rein to their lusts, unemployed scholars engage in perverse disputation, the Empire is filled with the utterances of Yang Chu and Mo Ti.<sup>1</sup> Those of the people that do not declare in favour of Yang, declare in favour of Mo. Yang is all for self, and denies the rights of a sovereign. Mo is for universal love, and denies the rights of a father. To deny the rights of a father and sovereign is to revert to the condition of brute beasts.

Kung-ming I<sup>2</sup> said : ‘ In your kitchen there is fat meat, and in your stables there are fat horses. Yet the people have a hungry look, and in the countryside there are some who have starved to death. This is tempting beasts to devour men.’ If the doctrines of Yang and Mo are not checked, and the doctrine of Confucius is not preached, then evil sayings will lead the people astray and block the way to benevolence and righteousness. If that way is blocked, beasts will be tempted to devour men, and men will devour one another.

I am alarmed at this prospect, and in defence of the doctrines of the ancient sages I would fight against Yang and Mo and eradicate their lewd sayings, so that evil counsellors

<sup>1</sup> The exact dates of these two philosophers are not known, but both may have been elder contemporaries of Mencius.

<sup>2</sup> A disciple of Tzū-chang, himself a disciple of Confucius.

like these may not again spring up. For, rising in the mind, their teachings cause harm in practice ; and, as the next step, work mischief in the government. Should a Sage appear again, he will speak no otherwise than I am doing now.

Of old, Yü curbed the floods, and the Empire was at peace ; the Duke of Chou embraced the tribes of east and north within his sway, drove out the wild beasts, and lo ! the people were at rest ; Confucius completed his ' Spring and Autumn ', and rebellious ministers and unnatural sons were seized with terror. It is said in the *Book of Songs* : ' They have given battle to the Jung and the Ti, they have dealt out punishment to Ching and Shu, and none dares to resist us.' The Duke of Chou would have given battle to those who deny the rights of father and sovereign.

I too wish to rectify men's hearts, to put an end to evil talk, to fight against unscrupulous deeds, to eradicate lewd sayings, and thus to carry on the work of those three great sages. Am I really fond of disputing ? No, it is simply that I cannot do otherwise. Any one who can lift up his voice against Yang and Mo approves himself a follower of the Sages.

#### IV

MENCIUS said : If you love others but are not loved in return examine your own feeling of benevolence. If you try to govern others and do not succeed, turn inwards and examine your wisdom. If you treat others with courtesy but evoke no response, examine your inward feeling of respect. Whenever our actions fail to produce the effect desired, we should look for the cause in ourselves. For when a man is inwardly correct, the world will not be slow in paying him homage.

\* \* \*

A man must insult himself before others will. A family must begin to destroy itself before others do so. A State must smite itself before it is smitten from without.

\* \* \*

With one who does violence to his own nature words are of no avail. For one who throws himself away, nothing can be done. To discard decency and right feeling in one's speech is what I mean by doing violence to one's nature. To profess inability to abide in benevolence and follow the road of righteousness is what I mean by throwing oneself away. Benevolence is man's peaceful abode, and righteousness his true road. Alas for those who desert the peaceful abode, and dwell not

## THE PATH OF DUTY

therein ! Alas for those who abandon the true road and follow it not !

\* \* \*

The path of duty lies close at hand, yet we seek for it afar. Our business lies in what is simple, yet we seek for it in what is difficult. If every man would love his parents and treat his elders as they should be treated, the Empire would be at peace.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : When Ch'iu was steward in the Chi family, and could not reform its ways, he exacted double the amount of grain that was formerly taken from the people. This made Confucius exclaim : 'Ch'iu is no disciple of mine ! Beat the drum, my children, and attack him.' Thus we see that those who seek to enrich a prince whose administration is not benevolent are condemned by Confucius ; how much more those who fight for him in an unjust cause. When land is the cause of contention, fields are littered with the slain ; when cities are the cause of contention, corpses fill the space within the walls. This is teaching the very soil beneath us to devour human flesh—a crime deserving something worse than death. Therefore I say that those who make fighting their trade should suffer the severest punishment ; those who band the feudal lords together for aggression should come next ; and last, those who force the people to till uncultivated land for the ruler's benefit.

\* \* \*

## A DROWNING EMPIRE

Ch'un-yü K'uan<sup>1</sup> asked : Is it not a rule of etiquette that men and women should not touch hands when passing things to one another ?—It is, replied Mencius.—Suppose a man's sister-in-law were drowning, should he pull her out with his hand ?—Not to rescue one's sister-in-law from drowning would be wolfish inhumanity. Pulling her out of the water with one's hand forms an exception to the general rule forbidding men and women to touch hands.—The Empire, said Ch'un-yü K'uan, is drowning before our eyes. Why will you not come to the rescue ?—A drowning Empire, replied Mencius, is to be rescued by the right principles ; a drowning sister-in-law by the hand. Do you expect me to rescue the Empire with my hand ?

\* \* \*

Kung-sun Ch'ou said : Why is it that a princely man does not teach his own son ?—Mencius replied : Circumstances forbid it. A teacher has to admonish his pupil as to what is right ; if his admonition is unheeded, he naturally gets angry, and a cause of offence will arise. The son may say to himself : 'My master professes to teach me the right path, but does not follow it himself' ; and the result is that father and son feel offended with each other, which is a bad state of things. The men of old used to exchange sons for purposes of tuition. Between father and son, good advice

<sup>1</sup> Ch'un-yü K'uan was a famous sophist of the Ch'i State. He is trying to induce Mencius to take office on the ground that the emergency of the time must override all other considerations. Mencius's reply is of course a mere quibble.



## TWO HALVES OF A TALLY

should not be accompanied by reproofs, for that leads to estrangement, than which there is no greater curse.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Man's weakness is his passion for teaching others.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Three things are unfilial, and of these the worst is to have no offspring. It was because he had no offspring that Shun married without telling his parents.<sup>1</sup> In the opinion of the best men, his motive made up for this omission.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Shun was born in Chu-fêng, migrated to Fu-hsia, and died in Ming-t'iao. He was an eastern tribesman. King Wên was born in Ch'i-chou and died in Pi-ying. He was a western tribesman. Their respective countries were over a thousand *li* apart, and they were separated by more than a thousand years in time. Yet, each having achieved his aim and brought his principles into vogue throughout the Middle Kingdom, those are found to agree like the two halves of a tally ; for the earlier and the later sage had one and the same ideal.

\* \* \*

When Tzû-ch'an<sup>2</sup> was responsible for the administration of the Chêng State, he would take people across the Chên and

<sup>1</sup> Who hated him and would have prevented the marriage.

<sup>2</sup> A contemporary of Confucius, who held a high opinion of him.

## TRYING TO PLEASE EVERYBODY

Wei rivers in his own carriage. Mencius said : He was kind, but did not know how to govern. If the foot-bridges are ready for use in the eleventh month of the year, and the bridges for wheeled traffic in the twelfth month, the people will not be reduced to wading through the water. So long as the princely man rules impartially, he may have the populace cleared out of his path when he goes abroad. How can he help each person across individually ? A governor who tries to please everybody will not find the day long enough for his purpose.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : It is for those who walk in the path of virtue<sup>1</sup> to train those who do not, and for those who have talent to train the untalented. Hence one is glad to have a worthy father or elder brother. If the virtuous reject those who are deficient in virtue, and if the talented reject the untalented, then there will be very little indeed to choose between the worthy and the unworthy.

\* \* \*

A man can only do things when he knows what things he will not do.

\* \* \*

What trouble is he not laying up for himself who discourses on other people's faults !

\* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> Or more literally, 'keep to the mean'.

## WHY CONFUCIUS PRAISED WATER

The great man makes no effort to be sincere in his speech nor resolute in his acts : he simply does as his conscience prompts him.

\* \* \*

The great man is one who has never lost the heart of a child.

\* \* \*

Not the support of one's parents when alive but rather the performance of their obsequies after death, is to be accounted the great test of filial piety.

\* \* \*

The disciple Hsü said : Confucius used to apostrophize water in terms of praise. What did he find to admire in it ? —Mencius replied : A spring of water flows in a copious stream, never ceasing day and night, filling all cavities and, continuing its course, finding its way at last into the ocean. Such is the behaviour of water that flows from a spring, and this is what he admired. But where there is no spring, though channels and ditches are filled after rainfall in the seventh and eighth months, yet the water may soon be expected to dry up again. Thus the princely man is ashamed to enjoy a reputation which exceeds his real deserts.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Small are the points in which man differs from the brute. These differences are shed by the common herd, but carefully preserved by the true gentleman.

Shun possessed clear insight into the nature of things,

## THE DUKE OF CHOU

and explored the relations between man and man. He may be said to have walked along the path of benevolence and righteousness rather than to have made a duty of them.

\* \* \*

Yü banned the pleasing wine, and loved good words. T'ang kept to the Middle Path, and gave office to worthy men regardless of their origin. King Wên saw the people as poor wounded creatures who were looking for the Way but had not found it. King Wu did not neglect the near nor forget the distant. The Duke of Chou tried to combine the qualities of the three kings<sup>1</sup> as shown in those four points; if any problem arose about them, he would meditate on it well into the night; and if haply he found the answer, he would sit and await the dawn.

\* \* \*

Mencius said: All statements about the nature of things must be based on phenomena, and the essence of phenomena is their regularity. What I object to in our pundits is their caprice. If they reasoned as Yü did in dealing with the flood, I should have no fault to find with their wisdom. Yü dealt with the waters by doing nothing in opposition to their nature. If our wise men also dealt with problems in this way, their wisdom would be great like his. The heavens are high above us, the stars are far away. If we simply investigate

<sup>1</sup> If the reading is right, Wên and Wu, as co-founders of the Chou dynasty, must be treated as one.

## THE NOBLER TYPE OF MAN

their phenomena, we may determine the date of a solstice a thousand years hence without rising from our seats.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

The princely man is distinguished from others by the feelings laid up in his heart, and these are the feelings of benevolence and propriety. The benevolent man loves his fellows ; the man of propriety respects his fellows. He who loves his fellows is loved by them in return ; he who respects his fellows is respected by them in return. The nobler type of man, when treated by anybody in a rude and churlish manner, will turn his eyes inward and say : ' I must have been lacking in benevolence ; I must have shown a want of propriety ; or how could this have happened ? ' Having examined himself thus, he may find that he has really been inspired by benevolence and propriety. If the other man is none the less rude and churlish, he will again subject himself to a searching examination, saying : ' I cannot have been true to myself.' But if he finds that he has been true to himself, and the rudeness of the other still persists, he will say to himself : ' This must be an unreasonable sort of fellow after all. If he behaves thus, there is little to choose between him and a bird or beast. And why should I be unduly concerned about a bird or beast ? '

Thus it is that the nobler type of man, while constantly

<sup>1</sup> This remarkable saying, which rings almost like an aphorism of Bacon, has been translated in many different ways. It seems to me that the idea of universal causality lies at the bottom of it.



solicitous, never suffers grief of any duration. Solicitude, indeed, he feels ; for he will argue thus : ' Shun was a man ; I too am a man. But Shun was an example to the Empire, worthy of being handed down to posterity, whereas I have not yet risen above the level of an ordinary villager.' This, then, causes him solicitude, which is nothing more than anxiety to become like Shun himself. But anything that would cause him real grief simply does not exist. He never acts without a feeling of benevolence, never moves without a sense of propriety. Even if some transient cause for grief were to come his way, he would not regard it as such.

\* \* \*

A man of Ch'i had a wife and a concubine, with whom he lived together in one house. Whenever he went out, he used to come back well filled with meat and wine ; and when his wife inquired with whom he had been dining, he always told her that they were people of wealth and rank. The wife spoke about it to the concubine, saying : ' When our good-man goes abroad, he always comes back full of meat and wine ; and when I ask him whom he has been dining with, he tells me they are people of wealth and rank. Yet no distinguished people have ever been to our house. I mean to spy upon him and see where he goes.' Accordingly, she got up early, and stealthily followed her husband wherever he went. Nobody in the whole city stopped to talk to him. But at last, when he arrived at the eastern suburb, where people were offering sacrifice among the tombs, he began begging

## A DOUBLE LIFE

for the scraps of food that were left over. Not having enough, he turned to another group of worshippers and begged more food from them. This, then, was the way in which he managed to obtain a bellyful !

His wife returned home and told her companion, saying : ' This is the husband we have always looked up to with respect, and to whom we are bound for life. And now to think that he behaves like that ! ' Thereupon the two women began railing at their husband, and wept together in the hall of their house. Meanwhile the man, unaware of what had happened, came strutting in from the street, and met his two womenfolk with his usual air of assurance.

As seen by a princely man, there are few indeed who do not give their wives cause for shame and tears by the means they employ in acquiring riches and honours, profit and advancement.

# V

WAN CHANG<sup>1</sup> asked Mencius, saying : When Shun went into the fields, he wept and cried aloud to the merciful heavens. Why did he do this ?—Mencius replied : Because he was full of yearning and regret.—Wan Chang continued : ‘When a son is loved by his parents, he is joyful and forgets them not ; when a son is hated by his parents, he bears his burden without resentment.’<sup>2</sup> Was Shun, then, resentful ?—Mencius replied : Ch’ang Hsi put this question to Kung-ming Kao,<sup>3</sup> saying : ‘About Shun’s faring forth into the fields I have received your pronouncement ; what I do not understand is his weeping and crying aloud to Heaven and to his parents.’ Kung-ming Kao said : ‘No, that is something you would not understand.’ He meant that a filial son could not have so light a heart as to say, ‘In exerting all my strength to labour in the fields, I am only discharging my duty as a son ; but whether my parents love me or no is no concern of mine.’

The Emperor caused his own children—nine sons and

<sup>1</sup> A disciple of Mencius, whose fifth book is named after him.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently a quotation.

<sup>3</sup> Ch’ang Hsi was a disciple of Kung-ming Kao, who is supposed to have been a disciple of Tsêng Ts’an, who was himself one of the principal disciples of Confucius.

two daughters—and all the state officials to pay homage to Shun in the furrowed fields, preparing for his behoof sheep and oxen, granaries and store-houses. The scholars of the Empire flocked to him in great numbers, and the Emperor arranged, first to share the administration with him, and then to hand it over to him entirely. Yet, because he was not in harmony with his parents, Shun felt like a miserable, homeless wretch.

To be the cynosure of the scholars of the realm is an object of men's ambition, but it was not enough to dispel Shun's sorrow. The possession of fair women is an object of men's desire, and Shun had both the Emperor's daughters to wife ; but this was not enough to dispel his sorrow. Wealth is what men covet, and Shun had the wealth of the whole Empire at his disposal ; but it availed not to dispel his sorrow. Honours are what men desire, and to Shun fell the supreme honour of being the Son of Heaven ; but even this was not enough to dispel his sorrow. If none of these things—the admiration of his fellows, the possession of fair women, wealth, and honour—was able to dispel his sorrow, it was because that sorrow could only be dispelled by the restoration of harmony with his parents.

The love of the child is for his father and mother. When he feels the urge of sex, his love turns towards young and beautiful girls. When he is married, he loves his wife and children. If he becomes a minister, he loves his sovereign, and if he fails to win his sovereign's regard, his heart aches within him. But the truly filial son loves his father and

## THE EMPIRE IS GOD-GIVEN

mother to the end of his days ; and in the great Shun I see an example of this love, still potent at the age of fifty.

\* \* \*

Wan Chang said to Mencius : Is it true that Yao gave the Empire to Shun ?—Mencius replied : No ; the Son of Heaven cannot give the Empire to another.—If so, when Shun obtained the Empire, who gave it to him ?—God gave it to him, was the reply.—When God gave it to him, did He make the charge explicit ?—No ; God does not speak. He merely signified His will through Shun's own conduct and handling of affairs.—What are we to understand by that ?—The Son of Heaven, replied Mencius, can recommend a man to God, but he cannot make God give that man the Empire. A feudal prince can recommend a man to the Son of Heaven, but he cannot force the Son of Heaven to make that man a prince. A great officer can recommend a man to his prince, but he cannot force the prince to make him a great officer. Of old, Yao recommended Shun to God, and God accepted him ; he showed him to the people, and the people accepted him. That is why I said that God did not speak, but merely signified His will through Shun's own conduct and handling of affairs.

Wan Chang said : I would venture to ask what is meant by his being recommended to God, and God's acceptance of him ; by his being shown to the people, and the people's acceptance of him ?—Why, said Mencius, he was appointed to preside over the sacrifices, and all the spirits were pleased



with them : that indicated his acceptance by God. He was placed in charge of public affairs, and they were well administered, so that the people felt confidence in him : that indicated his acceptance by the people. It was God and his fellow-men who gave the Empire to him. That is why I said, the Son of Heaven cannot give the Empire to another.

Shun served Yao as minister for twenty-eight years : no man could have done as much without the intervention of God. After Yao's death, when the three years' mourning was ended, Shun left Yao's son in possession and withdrew to the south of the South River. The princes of the Empire, however, coming to pay their respects at Court, sought out Shun, and not Yao's son ; litigants went to Shun, not to Yao's son ; bards sang the praises of Shun, not of Yao's son. Therefore I say it was God's doing. It was only after this that Shun came to the capital and was enthroned as Son of Heaven. Had he stayed in Yao's palace and used force towards Yao's son, it would have been an act of usurpation, not a gift from God. This is the principle expressed in the Great Declaration, where it is said : The eyes of my people are as the eyes of God ; the ears of my people are as the ears of God.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

Wan Chang asked Mencius, saying : It is commonly said that I Yin first recommended himself to T'ang by his skill

<sup>1</sup> See the *Book of History*, V. i. ii (7).

as a cook. Was that so?—Mencius replied: No, it was not so. I Yin was a farmer in the domain of Hsin who delighted in the principles of Yao and Shun, and would not have considered the offer of the imperial throne if it had involved any departure from their standard of righteousness. Had a thousand teams of horses been yoked for him, he would not have looked at them. If it conflicted with the standard of Yao and Shun, he would not have given, or accepted, as much as a single mustard seed.

T'ang sent messengers with presents of silk to invite him to take office; but he treated the offer with serene indifference and said: 'What should I do with these gifts that T'ang sends me? Far better that I should abide in the furrowed fields where I can continue to take delight in the principles of Yao and Shun.' Three times did T'ang send messengers to invite him; and at last he changed his mind, saying: 'Instead of abiding in the furrowed fields and delighting in the principles of Yao and Shun, were it not better that I should make of this prince a prince like Yao and Shun, and of his people a people like those of Yao and Shun? Why not see this with my own eyes? When God created mankind, it was His design that those who had knowledge should awaken those who were still ignorant, that those who awoke first should awaken those who were still asleep. I am one of God's people who has awakened first; it is for me to apply these principles and awaken this people; for who will do so if I do not?' It seemed to him that if any of the ordinary men and women in the

Empire remained untouched by the beneficent influence of Yao and Shun, it was just as if he himself had pushed them into a ditch. Thus it was that he shouldered the heavy burden of the Empire. And he went to T'ang and counselled him to save the people by smiting Hsia.<sup>1</sup>

I have never heard of one who became crooked, yet made others straight; still less of one who could disgrace himself in order to rectify the whole Empire. The conduct of Sages is not always alike; but whether they keep away from court or no, whether they give up office or retain it, they agree in one thing—the spotlessness of their soul.

I have heard that I Yin recommended himself to T'ang by the principles of Yao and Shun; I never heard that he did so by his skill as a cook.

\* \* \*

Wan Chang said to Mencius: May I venture to ask for your views on friendship?—Mencius replied: Friendship presumes not on age nor on rank nor on kinship. Real friendship is influenced only by qualities of the mind, and there must be no presumption about it. Mêng Hsien,<sup>2</sup> for instance, was the head of a house with a hundred chariots. He had five friends: Yo-chêng Ch'iu, Mu Chung, and three others whose names escape me. His relations with those five men were those of pure friendship, and his family did

<sup>1</sup> Chieh, the last ruler of the Hsia dynasty, was credited with the most monstrous crimes.

<sup>2</sup> A worthy minister of the Lu State in the sixth century B.C.

not come into account at all. Had it been otherwise, he would not have been friends with them. This has been seen, not only in a family of a hundred chariots, but also in the ruler of a small State. Thus, Duke Hui of Pi once said: 'I treat Tzū-ssū<sup>1</sup> as my teacher, and Yen Pan<sup>2</sup> as my friend. As for Wang Shun and Ch'ang Hsi, they are dependants who wait upon me.' And the same thing has applied to the ruler of a large State as well. Consider the relations subsisting between Duke P'ing of Chin<sup>3</sup> and Hai-t'ang. The Duke would come to Hai-t'ang's house, sit down, and eat with him at his request. Though there were nothing more than coarse rice and vegetable soup, he would always make a good meal, feeling that he could not refuse. But there he stopped short. He never gave his friend a place at Court, nor any administrative post, nor any rich emoluments. His attitude was that of a scholar honouring a worthy man, not that of a prince at all. When Shun went up to see the Emperor, the Emperor lodged his son-in-law in the second palace, and was entertained by him there. Each acted in turn as host or guest. Here is an instance of friendship between the Son of Heaven and an ordinary citizen.

Respect shown to a superior is called giving nobility its due; respect shown to an inferior is called honouring moral

<sup>1</sup> The grandson of Confucius, and reputed author of the Doctrine of the Mean.

<sup>2</sup> Supposed to have been the son of Yen Hui, the favourite disciple of Confucius.

<sup>3</sup> 556-531 B.C.

worth. In both cases, the right feeling involved is the same.

★ ★ ★

Mencius said : Office is not to be taken up on account of poverty, yet there are occasions when this may be the compelling motive. Marriage is not to be entered into as a means of support, yet there are occasions when this may be the compelling motive. He who takes office on account of poverty must refuse honours and remain in a humble position, refuse riches and remain poor. Acting on this principle, what sort of thing ought he to do ? Patrol a gate and sound a watchman's rattle.

Once, when Confucius was Keeper of Stores, he said : ' My accounts must balance, that is all I have to think of.' And when he was Custodian of the Pastures, he said : ' The sheep and oxen must be fine and fat, that is all I have to think of.'

Ambitious talk in a humble position is wrong. To stand in a prince's court without seeing one's principles put into practice is a cause for shame.

★ ★ ★

Wan Chang said : Why should not a scholar live at the expense of a feudal prince ?—Mencius replied : He would shrink from doing such a thing. It is right and proper that a ruler who has lost his kingdom should be dependent on another ruler ; but it is not right for a scholar to be so



## A PRINCE'S GIFTS

dependent.—Wan Chang went on : If the ruler sends him a present of grain, may he accept it?—He may.—On what principle?—On the principle that a ruler is morally bound to help his people in their need.—If he may accept help, why may he not accept regular pay?—His conscience would forbid him.—May I ask why that is so?—Watchmen who guard gates have their regular duties for which they are paid by the ruler. One who drew pay without regular duties to perform would be wanting in self-respect.—Can the acceptance of a prince's gifts be repeated indefinitely?—Mencius replied : Take the case of Duke Mu :<sup>1</sup> he was most assiduous in inquiring after Tzū-ssū's health and in sending him formal presents of meat from his cauldron. This made Tzū-ssū uneasy at last : he waved to the messenger to retire outside the front gate, and there, with his face to the north, he made a double obeisance and declined the gift. 'Now, I know,' he said, 'that my prince is feeding me as he would his dog or his horse.' So after that no more servants came with presents. Can a prince be said to delight in worthy men when he can neither give them advancement nor support them in the proper way?—If a prince wishes to support a man of the nobler type, may I ask how he should properly go about it?—A message from the prince should accompany the first gift, which will be duly accepted with a double obeisance. After that the steward will continue to send the grain, and the cook will continue to send the meat, without any further message from the prince. Tzū-ssū

<sup>1</sup> Ruler of the Lu State, 409-377 B.C.

## THE DUTIES OF A MINISTER

thought that making gifts of meat from the cauldron, for which he continually had to bow like a servant by way of thanks, was not the proper way to support a self-respecting man.

Compare Yao's behaviour to Shun : he made his nine sons do him service, and gave him his two daughters in marriage ; in order to support Shun in the furrowed fields, he got ready all his officers, his sheep and his cattle, his barns and his granaries ; afterwards he raised him up and set him in the highest place. Hence the phrase : ' A worthy man honoured by his sovereign.'

\* \* \*

King Hsüan of Ch'i inquired about the duties of a minister. —Which kind of minister do you mean ? said Mencius. —Why, said the King, are not all ministers the same ? —No, replied Mencius. There are ministers of the blood royal, and there are ministers who belong to a different family. —The King then amended his question, and asked about the former class. —Mencius said : If the sovereign has grave faults they will censure him. And, after they have repeated their censure again and again, if he still pays no heed, they will dethrone him. —This answer took the King aback, and he changed countenance. But Mencius said : Your Majesty must not take my words amiss. You asked me a question, and I felt bound to answer frankly. —The King regained his composure, and asked next about the ministers belonging to a different family. Mencius replied : If the sovereign has faults, they will censure them. After they have done this several times, if he still pays no heed, they will leave the country.

## VI

THE philosopher Kao said : Man's nature may be likened to a willow tree ; righteousness, to a cup or bowl. Making a man's nature righteous and good is like making cups and bowls out of the wood of a willow tree.—Mencius replied : Can you make cups and bowls without interfering with the nature of the willow ? No, you can only do so by doing violence to its nature. That being the case, would you say that men can only be made righteous and good by doing violence to their nature ? Your argument would then necessarily lead mankind to regard goodness and righteousness as a misfortune !

★ ★ ★

The philosopher Kao said : Man's nature is like a current of water : deflected in an easterly direction, it will flow to the east ; deflected in a westerly direction, it will flow to the west. And just as water has no predilection either for east or for west, so man's nature is not predisposed either to good or to evil.—Mencius replied : It is true that water has no predilection for east or west, but will it flow equally well up or down ? Human nature is disposed towards goodness just as water flows downwards. There is no water but flows down, and no men but show this tendency

## THE PHILOSOPHER KAO

to good. Now, if water is splashed up, it can be made to go right over your head; by forcing it along, it can be made to go uphill. But how can that be termed its natural bent? It is some external force that causes it to do so. And likewise, if men are made to do what is not good, their nature is being distorted in a similar way.

\* \* \*

The philosopher Kao said: By life we mean nature.—Mencius said: Do you call life nature in the same sense that you call white white?—Yes.—Is the whiteness of white feathers the same as the whiteness of white snow? And is the whiteness of white snow the same as the whiteness of white jade?—Yes.—Then is the nature of a dog the same as the nature of an ox, and the nature of an ox the same as the nature of a man?<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

The philosopher Kao said: The appetite for food and the appetite of sex are both part of our inmost nature. Likewise, benevolence is something that comes from within, not from without, whereas righteousness is something that comes from without, not from within.—Mencius asked: What do you mean when you say that benevolence comes from within and righteousness comes from without?—He replied: Here is a man who is advanced in years, and I

<sup>1</sup> *Reductio ad absurdum*. But the clause about whiteness is really irrelevant, and the reasoning is not strictly logical unless it be admitted that life is the same in dogs, oxen and men.

treat him accordingly. This recognition of age is no part of my inmost self. In the same way, if a man is white, I recognise him as such because his whiteness is something external. Therefore I say that righteousness comes from without.—Mencius said: Certainly there is no difference between the whiteness of a white horse and the whiteness of a white man. But I do not admit that there is no difference between our recognition of age in an old horse and our recognition of age in an old man. Moreover, is it old age itself, or our recognition of old age, that brings this feeling of righteousness into play?—Kao replied: I love my own younger brother, but not the younger brother of a man from the Ch'in State. That is to say, the feeling springs from my own heart, and therefore I call it internal. On the other hand, I recognise the fact of old age in a man of the Ch'u State as well as in one of my own people. That is to say, the feeling is one for old age in general, and therefore I call it external.—Mencius then said: A liking for roast meat is the same whether it be cooked by ourselves or by a man of Ch'in. Thus your principle applies to objects as well. Would you then say that a liking for roast meat is also external?<sup>1</sup>

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The disciple Kung-tu said: The philosopher Kao says that human nature is neither good nor bad. Some say, human nature can be turned either towards good or to-

<sup>1</sup> Kao had begun by saying that man's appetite for food was something internal.



wards evil ; hence when Wên and Wu arose, the people loved what was good ; when Yu and Li<sup>1</sup> arose, they loved cruelty. Others say, some natures are good and some are bad. Hence the appearance of Hsiang<sup>2</sup> even under such a sovereign as Yao, and the appearance of Shun even with such a father as Ku-sou<sup>2</sup> ; or the appearance of Ch'i, Viscount of Wei, and the prince Pi-kan,<sup>3</sup> with Chou for their nephew, and their sovereign lord to boot. But now you assert that human nature is good. Are all those opinions then wrong ?—Mencius replied : It is in virtue of its innate feelings that human nature may be considered good. That is what I mean in calling it good. If a man's actions are evil, it is not his instincts that are to blame. The feelings of compassion, of shame and repugnance, of moral discrimination, are common to all men. The feeling of compassion—that is benevolence ; the feeling of shame and repugnance—that is righteousness ; the feeling of reverence—that is propriety ; the feeling of discrimination between right and wrong—that is wisdom. Benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are not instilled into us from without—they are part of our very being. Only we give them no thought. Hence the saying : ' You can have them

<sup>1</sup> Emperors of the eighth and ninth centuries B.C., who oppressed the people.

<sup>2</sup> Ku-sou, the father, and Hsiang, the half-brother, of the Emperor Shun, both plotted against his life.

<sup>3</sup> The Viscount of Wei was really an elder brother of the tyrant Chou Hsin. Pi-kan had his heart torn out in order that his nephew might see ' what the heart of a sage looked like '.

## THE ALLEGORY OF MOUNT NIU

for the seeking, or lose them through neglect.' Some will have twice as much as others, some five times as much, and some incalculably more, but that is because those others have not been able to develop their natural instincts to the full.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Beautiful once were the trees on Mount Niu :<sup>1</sup> but, standing on the outskirts of a great capital, they were ruthlessly lopped with axe and bill : how could their beauty then endure ? Quickened, however, by the alternation of day and night, and fed by the rains and the dew, some shoots again put forth. But cows and goats came and browsed upon them, and so the mountain became denuded as you see it now ; and seeing its denudation, people imagine that no timber ever grew upon it. Yet such was assuredly not its real nature. So with the natural endowment of man : how can it be devoid of the feeling of benevolence or the sense of what is right ? But these good feelings are shed in the same way as trees are felled by the axe. If they are cut down day after day, how can the beauty of the mind endure ? Though quickened by the alternation of day and night, the moral judgements which are intimately associated with the mind of man tend to grow weaker after the breath of dawn, and as the result of the day's destructive work atrophy sets in.<sup>2</sup> As this

<sup>1</sup> In the Ch'i State.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence does not carry on the allegory quite as we should expect. The Chinese text is full of difficulty and perhaps corrupt ;

atrophy continues, the healing influence of night is insufficient to keep them alive ; and this being so, the mind reverts to a state not far removed from that of brute beasts. Seeing this, one is apt to imagine that the right disposition never existed. Yet how can such a state be regarded as the real nature of man ? Given proper nourishment, all things will develop ; if it is withheld, they will inevitably decay. Confucius said : ' Hold fast, and it will remain ; relax your hold, and it will disappear. It comes and goes without regard to time and place.' <sup>1</sup> Was it not the mind of which he spake ?

\* \* \*

Mencius said : It is no wonder that the King <sup>2</sup> is not wise. The most easily-grown plant in the world will not live if one day it is exposed to heat, and for the next ten days to cold. My visits to the King are few and far between, and as soon as I leave his presence he is overrun with people whose effect on him is like that of cold upon plants. Though I may succeed in bringing up a sprout here and there, what good can they be ?

Now, chess-playing <sup>3</sup> is one of the lesser arts, but it cannot but Mencius seems to hold that man's virtuous impulses are really strengthened by the season of repose which night affords.

<sup>1</sup> A saying of Confucius which is only recorded here.

<sup>2</sup> Probably King Hsüan of Ch'i. (See page 26 *et al.*)

<sup>3</sup> The Chinese have two games played on a chequer-board, one called *hsiang-ch'i* or 'elephant chequers', which is a modification of our chess, the other *wei-ch'i* or 'surrounding chequers'. The latter is the more ancient game, and is probably the one referred to here.

## RIGHTEOUSNESS DEARER THAN LIFE

be acquired without perfect concentration of the mind. 'Chess Ch'iu' is the best player in the kingdom, so let us suppose that 'Chess Ch'iu' is teaching the game to two persons, one of whom concentrates his whole attention on the lesson he is receiving, while the other, though seeming to listen, is really engrossed in the approach of a wild swan, and wondering if he can bring it down with his bow and arrow. The latter will not become as good a chess-player as his fellow-pupil, but is this because he is not so clever? No, not at all.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : I am fond of fish, and I am also fond of bear's paws. If I cannot have both, I will give up the fish and take the bear's paws. Similarly, I hold life dear, and also hold righteousness dear. If I cannot have both, I will give up my life and keep my righteousness. Although I hold life dear, there are things which I hold dearer than life, therefore I will not keep it at the expense of what is right. Although I hate death, there are things which I hate more than death, therefore there are certain dangers from which I will not flee. If there was nothing that men desired more than life, would they not use any possible means of preserving it? And if there was nothing men hated more than death, would they not do anything to escape from danger? Yet there are means of preserving one's life which men will not use, ways of avoiding danger which men will not adopt. Thus it appears that men desire some things more than life, and hate some things more than death. And it is not only

## A CROOKED FINGER

the virtuous man who has such feelings ; all men have them. What distinguishes the virtuous man is that he can keep those feelings from being stifled within him.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Benevolence is the feeling of man's heart, righteousness is the path for man's following. To stray from the path and leave it untrod, to let the feeling go and not know where to seek it :—this is pitiful indeed ! When our dogs and fowls are lost, we know how to find them, but our lost feeling we know not how to find. The end and aim of all learning is nothing but this—to seek and find the feeling we have lost.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Suppose there is a man whose fourth finger <sup>1</sup> is crooked and cannot be stretched out, yet without causing him pain or inconvenience. If there were a healer in Ch'in or Ch'u who could straighten it for him, he would cheerfully travel all that distance, simply because his finger is not so good as other men's. The fact that his finger is not so good as other men's causes him to feel annoyance, but the fact that his moral nature is not so good as other men's has no such effect. This is called lacking a sense of proportion.

\* \* \*

The disciple Kung-tu asked, saying : Human nature is common to us all. How is it, then, that some are great

<sup>1</sup> Literally, 'the nameless finger'—the fourth, counting the thumb.



## THE NOBILITY OF HEAVEN

men and some are small men?—Mencius replied : Those that follow their higher nature are great men ; those that follow their lower nature are small men.—Kung-tu said : Seeing that all alike are men, how is it that some follow their higher nature and some their lower nature?—Mencius replied : The function of the eye and the ear is not thought, but is determined by material objects ; for when objects impinge on the senses, these cannot but follow wherever they lead. Thought is the function of the mind : by thinking, it achieves ; by not thinking, it fails to achieve. These faculties are implanted in us by Nature. If we take our stand from the first on the higher part of our being, the lower part will not be able to rob us of it. It is simply this that constitutes the great man.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Heaven confers titles of nobility as well as man. Man's titles of nobility are duke, chancellor, great officer. Those of Heaven are benevolence, righteousness, true-heartedness and good faith, with unwearying delight in the practice of those virtues. The men of old cultivated the nobility of Heaven, and the nobility of man followed naturally in its wake. The men of to-day cultivate the nobility of Heaven only with an eye to the nobility of man, and when that has been won they cast away the other. But this is the height of delusion ; for in the end they must surely lose the nobility of man as well.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Benevolence overcomes its opposite even as water overcomes fire. But those who practise benevolence nowadays are taking a cup of water, as it were, to quench a cart-load of burning fuel. Failing to extinguish the blaze, they say that water cannot overcome fire ! This only helps the cause of those who are against benevolence altogether,<sup>1</sup> and in the end their own benevolence will also disappear.

\* \* \*

Of all seeds, the five kinds of grain are the best ; yet if unripe, they are not so good as darnel or tares. The same is true of benevolence : here, too, ripeness is all.

\* \* \*

A man of Jên<sup>2</sup> asked the disciple Wu-lu, saying : Which is the more important, food or correct behaviour ?—He replied : Correct behaviour is the more important.—And which is the more important, sexual relations or correct behaviour ?—Correct behaviour.—If observance of the rules of correct behaviour in regard to food means starving to death, whereas the infringement of them means getting food, must those rules still be observed ? If the necessity of fetching one's bride in person<sup>3</sup> prevents one from getting a wife, whereas the omission of this ceremony would make

<sup>1</sup> Such as the Taoists (in theory at least), and at a later date the Legalists.

<sup>2</sup> A small State in the present Chi-ning Chou, Shantung.

<sup>3</sup> As was the custom, according to the *Book of Rites*.

## A POLITICAL ADVISER

it possible to get one, is the ceremony still to be regarded as essential?—Wu-lu was unable to answer this, so the next day he went to Tsou and put the case to Mencius. Mencius said: What is the difficulty in answering these questions? Any small piece of wood, if adjusted only at the top and not at the bottom, may be brought up to the height of a lofty gable. When we say that gold is heavier than feathers, do we mean that a single golden button is heavier than a cart-load of feathers? Here you are given a case in which rules of behaviour are of little importance as compared with food or sexual relations; but it might just as well be the other way round. Go and say this to your friend: 'If you can get food from your elder brother by twisting his arm and snatching it from him, but not otherwise, will you twist his arm? If you can only get a wife by leaping over your neighbour's wall and carrying off his virgin daughter, will you carry her off in this way?'

\* \* \*

Sung K'êng<sup>1</sup> was just starting for Ch'u when Mencius met him at Shih-ch'iu and said: Where are you going, Sir?—He replied: I hear that Ch'in and Ch'u are joining battle, so I am going to see the King of Ch'u and advise him to stop. If he takes my counsel amiss, I shall proceed to interview the King of Ch'in and give him similar advice. With one of the two I am bound to succeed. Mencius said: Without inquiring into details, may I beg you to let me

<sup>1</sup> An itinerant politician.

know the gist of your scheme? What sort of persuasion will you use?—I shall point out to them, replied Sung K'eng, that the course they are taking is unprofitable.—Sir, said Mencius, your intentions are admirable, but your argument won't pass muster. If you adduce profit as the ground for your advice to the Kings of Ch'in and Ch'u, and they stop their military operations because the idea of profit is pleasing to them, then the soldiers in their armies will be glad to stop simply because they are eager for profit. Ministers will serve their prince from considerations of profit, sons will serve their fathers, and younger brothers their elder brothers from considerations of profit. All these will finally abandon benevolence and righteousness, and in their dealings with one another be guided solely by considerations of profit. Those actuated by such motives have never failed to come to ruin.

If you, Sir, base your advice on benevolence and righteousness, and if the Kings of Ch'in and Ch'u put an end to hostilities because they find pleasure in those virtues, then the soldiers will be glad to stop because they also rejoice in them; and it will be from virtuous motives that ministers will serve their prince, sons their fathers, and younger brothers their elder brothers. Thus all of them with their dealings with one another will abandon the idea of profit and be guided by feelings of benevolence and righteousness. The prince that is swayed by such motives has never yet failed to gain regal power. Why, then, must you talk of profit?

\* \* \*

The Duke of Lu wanted to place Shên Tzū<sup>1</sup> at the head of his army, but Mencius said: To use one's people in war without teaching them first is simply to destroy them<sup>2</sup>; and a destroyer of the people would not have been allowed to exist in the age of Yao and Shun. Even though you were to conquer Ch'i in a single battle, and thus get possession of Nan-yang, the thing would still be wrong.—This speech made Shên Tzū blush, and he said in an offended tone: I can't follow you there at all.—Then let me make myself clear, said Mencius. The Emperor's territory measures a thousand *li* square; were it less than this, it would not suffice for the entertainment of his vassals. The territory of a vassal prince measures a hundred *li* square; were it less than this, it would not suffice for the prescribed observances<sup>3</sup> which are recorded in his ancestral temple. When the Duke of Chou received Lu as his fief, the country was a hundred *li* square. Small though it was, it was not insufficient. When T'ai Kung<sup>4</sup> received Ch'i as his fief, that country too was a hundred *li* square. Small though it was, it was not insufficient. Lu to-day is five times as large as that: if a kingly ruler were to appear, do you think he

<sup>1</sup> A native of the Chao State with a high reputation as a soldier. On hearing that he was to be appointed commander-in-chief, Mencius knew that the Duke was planning an attack on Ch'i.

<sup>2</sup> An echo of Confucius, who said: 'To take an untrained multitude into battle is equivalent to throwing them away.'

<sup>3</sup> Public sacrifices, entertainments, and so forth.

<sup>4</sup> Chief counsellor of King Wên and King Wu, whom he helped to overthrow the tyrant Chou Hsin.



## DESPOILERS OF THE PEOPLE

would enlarge his domain or make it smaller? If it were merely a matter of taking from one and giving to another, a good man would not do it; how much less if the enterprise entails the slaughter of men! The nobler type of man serves his prince by simply guiding him along the right way and fixing his mind on benevolence.

\* \* \*

In these days a prince's servants boast of being able to extend his land and fill his treasury. They are called good ministers to-day, but the ancients would have called them despoilers of the people. To seek to enrich a prince who follows not the right way and whose mind is not fixed on benevolence is like enriching the tyrant Chieh.<sup>1</sup> They boast of knowing how to make pacts with other States that will enable their prince to win his battles. These are called good ministers to-day, but the ancients would have called them despoilers of the people. To employ military force on behalf of a prince who follows not the right way and whose mind is not fixed on benevolence is like aiding and abetting the tyrant Chieh.

A prince who adopts the moral standard of the world to-day and makes no attempt to reform its practices could not retain the Empire, if it were bestowed upon him, for a single morning.

\* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> The last ruler of the Hsia dynasty, who was dethroned by Ch'êng T'ang in 1766 B.C. according to the accepted chronology.

Po Kuei<sup>1</sup> said : My way of dealing with the flood water was better than Yü's.<sup>2</sup>—Mencius replied : Sir, you are mistaken. Yü's method was based on the nature of water itself, for he made the four seas its receptacle, whereas you, my friend, deflected it into the territory of your neighbours. The diversion of water from its proper channel leads first to flooding, and then to wholesale inundation, a thing which is abhorrent to anyone with human feeling. That, my friend, is where you made your mistake.

\* \* \*

The prince of Lu thought of making the disciple Yo Chêng his Chancellor. Mencius said : When I heard of it I could not sleep for joy.—Kung-sun Ch'ou asked : Is Yo Chêng a strong man ?—No.—Has he wisdom and foresight ?—No.—Is he a man of wide experience and knowledge ?—No.—How is it, then, that you could not sleep for joy ?—Because he is a man who loves goodness.—A lover of goodness ? Is that enough ?—Love of goodness is more than enough for governing the Empire itself, much more so a small State like Lu. If a man loves the good, then all within the Four Seas will set distance at naught and come to offer what goodness is in them. But if he be no lover of goodness, people will set him down as arrogant and self-satisfied, of the sort that says : ' I know that already.' Now,

<sup>1</sup> An expert who had been appointed to drain away recent floods.

<sup>2</sup> Yü the Great, first emperor of the Hsia dynasty. For his engineering feats, see page 60.

## THE TEST OF SUFFERING

arrogant language and looks will keep worthy men at a distance, and flatterers and toadies will come in their stead. Having intercourse only with toadies and flatterers, how can he govern his country as he would wish?

\* \* \*

Mencius said: Shun sprang from the furrowed fields, Fu Yüeh<sup>1</sup> rose to office from a carpenter's shop, Chiao Kō<sup>2</sup> from the salt-fish trade, Kuan I-wu<sup>3</sup> from a public gaol, Sun-shu Ao<sup>4</sup> from the seashore, and Po-li Hsi<sup>5</sup> from the market-place. For God, when about to charge a man with a great trust, will try his soul with bitterness, subject his bones and sinews to toil and his body to hunger, reduce him to nakedness and want, and bring his enterprises to naught. Thus his mind is made active, his character tempered, and his weaknesses are made good.

Men commonly go wrong before they can go right. Their hearts must be wrung and their hopes must be dashed before they can begin to rise. Things must be shown in looks and uttered in speech before they can begin to understand. If at home a prince have not about him legalists

<sup>1</sup> A famous minister of the Yin dynasty.

<sup>2</sup> Minister of the tyrant Chou Hsin.

<sup>3</sup> Or Kuan Chung, Chancellor of the Ch'i State under Duke Huan in the seventh century B.C.

<sup>4</sup> Thrice Prime Minister in the Ch'u State between 613 and 591 B.C.

<sup>5</sup> A native of the Yü State who became Prime Minister in Ch'in at the age of seventy.

## EASE AND PLEASURE BRING DEATH

and others who thwart his will, if abroad he be not confronted with hostile States and external trouble, his country usually comes to destruction. Only then does he realise that sorrow and trouble bring life, whereas ease and pleasure bring death.

## VII

MENCIUS said : He who gets to the bottom of his mind comes to know his own nature ; knowing his own nature, he also knows God. Preserving one's mind in its integrity and nourishing one's nature is the way to serve God. To practise self-cultivation and await whatever may betide, indifferent whether life be long or short : that is the way to establish one's destiny.

★ ★ ★

Everything has its own destiny, and it is for us to accept our destiny in its true form. Thus, one who understands what destiny means will not stand under a tottering wall. One who meets his death pursuing the path of duty has achieved his true destiny, but not so one who dies as a malefactor.

★ ★ ★

All things are complete within us. There is no greater joy than to return upon oneself and find a clear conscience there. If we strive for charity in our conduct, we shall find ourselves near the goal of perfect virtue.

★ ★ ★



## THE SENSE OF SHAME

To act without clear understanding, to form habits without investigation, to follow a path all one's life without knowing where it really leads :—such is the behaviour of the multitude.

\* \* \*

A man may not be without shame. But if he is ashamed of having been without shame, then he has no cause for shame.

\* \* \*

The sense of shame means much to a man. One who indulges in cunning tricks and crafty schemes has no use for shame. If he is not ashamed of being worse than his fellows, what will he have in common with them at all?

\* \* \*

The worthy monarchs of old loved goodness and forgot their power. And the worthy scholars of old, did they not do the same? They loved their chosen Way, and forgot the power which others wielded. So it was that, unless kings and princes treated them with the utmost respect and courtesy, they could not often get to see them. And if they could not get to see them often, still less could they get them to be their ministers.

\* \* \*

Mencius said to Sung Kou-chien<sup>1</sup>: You are a great

<sup>1</sup> Or possibly, Kou-chien of the Sung State. He was one of the itinerant politicians who at this period used to travel from state to state, tendering advice to their rulers.

traveller, Sir, are you not? Let me speak to you on the subject. If your counsels are heeded, be content; if they are not heeded, still be content.—Kou-chien said: What should I do in order to have this feeling of contentment?—Honour virtue, was the reply, and take delight in righteousness; then this feeling will come to you. Poverty does not make the worthy scholar lose his righteousness, success does not make him swerve from the Way. Poor, yet not losing his righteousness, he remains master of himself; successful, yet not swerving from the Way, he will not disappoint the hopes of the people. The man of old who attained his ambition showered blessings upon the people; or if he failed, he made self-improvement his task and shone brightly before the world. If without means, he concentrated his efforts on his own virtue; if he rose to power, he made the whole Empire virtuous as well.

\* \* \*

Mencius said: Kindly words do not impress men so deeply as a name for kindness. Good government does not win the people so well as good teaching, for good government excites their fear, while good teaching excites their affection. Good government wins the people's wealth,<sup>1</sup> good teaching wins the people's heart.

\* \* \*

Men of exceptional shrewdness and resource have usually

<sup>1</sup> By an efficient system of taxation? One suspects a satirical intent in these sentences.

### THREE SOURCES OF JOY

been through hard times. Friendless orphans and bastard sons, who have to keep their minds alert for danger and look far ahead for trouble, are often those who come to the front.

\* \* \*

The nobler type of man has three sources of joy, and to rule the Empire is not one of them. That his parents are both alive, that his brethren are free from trouble—this is his first source of joy. That he need feel no shame in the presence of God, no embarrassment before his fellow men—this is his second source of joy. That it is his to train and teach the budding talent of the Empire—this is his third source of joy. Yes, the nobler type of man has three sources of joy, and to rule the Empire is not one of them.

\* \* \*

An abundant population in a wide-spreading land is an object of the princely man's desire, but his true pleasure does not lie therein. To stand in the middle of the Empire, and give peace to all his subjects within the Four Seas pleases the princely man's heart, but the satisfaction of his inmost nature does not lie therein. This satisfaction is not increased by the scope of his activity, however large, nor diminished by a life of straitened means; for these are matters of individual appointment. The satisfaction of his inmost nature lies in the virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom, which are rooted in his breast. Their full development is made manifest in the serenity of his

SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY  
SETTLE NO STONE

## ENRICHING THE PEOPLE

countenance, the nobility of his bearing, and the general character they impart to his whole body, which knows how to move without need of speech.

\* \* \*

If the fields are cultivated with care and taxation is light, the people can be made rich. If the people are fed in due accord with the season, and employed within proper limits, their wealth will exceed their needs. Without water and fire people cannot live. Knock at a man's door in the evening to ask for water or fire, and he will surely give them to you, so abundant are they. A Sage will order the Empire in such a way that pulse and grain are as abundant as water and fire; and when this is so, how can there be a lack of goodness among the people?

\* \* \*

He who gets up at cock-crow and toils to do good is a follower of Shun. He who gets up at cock-crow and toils after gain is a follower of Chih.<sup>1</sup> Would you know the difference between Shun and Chih, it is no more than the space between goodness and gain.

\* \* \*

Yang Tzū's principle was one of pure egoism. He declared that he would not pluck a single hair from his body in order to benefit the Empire. Mo Tzū's principle, on the other

<sup>1</sup> A noted robber chief in the time of Confucius, and younger brother of Hui of Liu-hsia (see page 51).

hand, was one of universal love. In order to benefit the Empire he would have rubbed his body smooth, through toil, from top to toe. Tzū Mo<sup>1</sup> held the mean between these extremes, which comes nearer to what is right. But holding the mean without regard to circumstances is equally narrow-minded. What makes me dislike this narrow-mindedness is that it perverts the true Way. It exalts a single principle but abandons all the rest.

\* \* \*

To the hungry all food is sweet ; to the thirsty all drink is sweet. And so the true taste of food and drink is lost. Hunger and thirst do real harm to the palate and stomach, and not only to them, but also to men's minds. If a man can prevent the harm inflicted by hunger and thirst<sup>2</sup> from affecting his mind, then indeed he need not be troubled by a sense of inferiority to his fellows.

\* \* \*

A man engaged on any piece of work may be compared to one digging a well. If he digs nine fathoms deep, and gives up before reaching a spring, he may be said to have lost all his labour on the well.

\* \* \*

Yao and Shun were naturally good. T'ang and Wu

<sup>1</sup> Nothing more is known about this philosopher except that he came from Lu. For Yang Chu and Mo<sub>a</sub>Ti (see page 69).

<sup>2</sup> That is, the evils of poverty.



assimilated goodness. The Five Dictators<sup>1</sup> put on a semblance of goodness ; and after they had worn it long enough, who should know that it was not their own ?

\* \* \*

Kung-sun Ch'ou said : I Yin declared that he could not be on friendly terms with one so contumacious, and banished T'ai Chia<sup>2</sup> to T'ung, whereat the people rejoiced. But when T'ai Chia reformed his ways he brought him back, and again the people rejoiced. When a worthy man is minister, and his prince proves unworthy, is he really justified in banishing him ?—Mencius replied : If he has I Yin's purity of motive, yes. Otherwise it would be an act of usurpation.

\* \* \*

Kung-sun Ch'ou said : We read in the *Book of Songs* that the princely man does not eat the bread of idleness. How is it, then, that we see him eating, yet doing no labour in the fields ?—Mencius replied : When the ruler of a State in which the princely man resides avails himself of his services, peace, wealth, honour and glory will be his. And if the young follow the princely man's teaching, filial piety, brotherly respect, conscientiousness and good faith will be theirs. What better example of 'not eating the bread of idleness' could there be than this ?

\* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> See page 40, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> T'ang's grandson and successor, supposed to have reigned 1753-1721 B.C.

## THE BUSINESS OF THE SCHOLAR

The King's son, Tien,<sup>1</sup> asked : What is the business of the scholar?—Mencius replied : To aim high.—What do you mean by aiming high?—I mean benevolence and righteousness—nothing more than that. To put a single innocent person to death is the negation of benevolence ; to take what does not belong to you is the negation of righteousness. Where should the scholar dwell save in benevolence ? What path should he follow save the path of righteousness ? To dwell in benevolence and pursue righteousness is the whole business of a great man.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : If the kingdom of Ch'i were wrongfully offered to Chung Tzū,<sup>2</sup> he would not accept it, and all men would put their faith and trust in him. But this, after all, is the same kind of righteousness that refuses a basket of rice or a bowl of bean soup. With the highest duties of man—the relations between kinsfolk, sovereign and subject, superiors and inferiors—he has nothing to do. Because he has lesser qualities, is it safe to credit him with great ones ?

\* \* \*

T'ao Ying<sup>3</sup> asked, saying : If, when Shun was emperor

<sup>1</sup> The son of King Hsüan of Ch'i.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., Ch'ên Chung, a member of an ancient family in Ch'i, noted for his severe asceticism, who led the life of a hermit. Elsewhere Mencius places him first among the scholars of Ch'i ('the thumb among the fingers'), but criticises his morbid scrupulosity.

<sup>3</sup> A disciple of Mencius.

## GIVING UP THE EMPIRE

with Kao Yao as Minister of Justice, his father Ku-sou had slain a man, what would have happened?—Mencius said : He would simply have been arrested.—Then Shun would not have interfered?—How could he have interfered, Kao Yao having full authority for his action?—What would Shun have done, then?—Shun would have made no more of giving up the Empire than of casting away an old shoe. He would have stolen away with his father on his back, taken up his abode somewhere on the sea-coast, and lived for the rest of his days cheerful and contented, never thinking of the world he had quitted.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : To feed a person without loving him is to treat him like a pig. To love without respecting him is to treat him like a domestic pet. Honour and respect come before the presentation of gifts. But if it is only sham honour and respect, the higher type of man will not be taken in by them.

\* \* \*

Our body and its functions are bestowed on us by God ; but a man must be a Sage before he can fulfil those functions aright.

\* \* \*

Kung-sun Ch'ou said : Fair and noble is the Way you show us, but it seems to point up to heaven itself, which is beyond

## INSTANCES OF PRESUMPTION

our reach. Why not limit it to a goal that can be reached by dint of daily endeavour?—Mencius replied : A master craftsman does not alter his marking-line to suit the capacity of a clumsy worker. The marksman Yi<sup>1</sup> did not modify the pull of his bow for the sake of a novice in the art. The model teacher gives the impulse, as it were, drawing the bow but not letting the arrow fly. He stands in the very centre of the Way, and those follow him who can.

\* \* \*

The disciple Kung-tu said : When Kêng of T'êng<sup>2</sup> attended your school, it might have seemed that special courtesy was called for, yet you did not answer his questions. Why was that?—Mencius replied : I never answer questions asked by one who presumes on his nobility, on his character, on his age, on services rendered, or on old acquaintance. Two such instances of presumption were present in the case of Kêng.

\* \* \*

The higher type of man treats animals with kindness, but not with the same sort of benevolence that he shows to the people ; which, again, is different from the personal affection that he shows to his parents. He is loving to his parents and benevolent to the people ; benevolent to the people and kind to animals.

<sup>1</sup> A famous legendary archer of the twenty-second century B.C.

<sup>2</sup> A younger brother of the Duke of T'êng. (See pages 38, 39.)

The wise take all knowledge as their province, but concentrate on what is most important.\* The benevolent are catholic in their sympathies, but consider it of most importance to attach themselves to men of worth. Even the wisdom of Yao and Shun did not cover all things, but put the essential things first; their benevolence did not mean love for every human being so much as zealous attachment to men of worth. Inability to keep the three years' mourning for parents, combined with strict observance of the shorter periods for distant relatives; immoderate guzzling and tippling, combined with punctilious ascertainment of the rule against tearing meat with the teeth:<sup>1</sup>—these are examples of ignoring what is important.

\* \* \*

Mencius said: How wanting in benevolence was King Hui of Liang!<sup>2</sup> For the benevolent man treats those he does not love like those he does love; the man without benevolence treats those he loves like those he does not love.—Kung-sun Ch'ou asked what he meant.—For the sake of some territory, King Hui of Liang sent his subjects to battle, and they were beaten to pulp. Then he made another attempt, and fearing he might not win, drove his beloved son to the slaughter. That is what I call treating those one loves like those one does not love.

\* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> See the *Book of Rites*, I. i. iii. 54.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 21-25.



## NO RIGHTEOUS WARS

Mencius said : In the Spring and Autumn period<sup>1</sup> there were no righteous wars, though some may have been better than others. A punitive war is one in which a feudal sovereign chastises his vassals. Rival States cannot wage punitive wars against each other.

\* \* \*

Rather than believe the Histories from end to end, it would be better to have no Histories at all. In the *Completion of the War*, for instance, there are only two or three sections which I can accept. The man of benevolence has no enemy in the world. When the most benevolent of men smote the least benevolent,<sup>2</sup> how could the resultant bloodshed have 'set the pestles<sup>3</sup> afloat'?

\* \* \*

A carpenter or wheelwright may hand a man the square and compasses, but he cannot give him the skill to use them.

\* \* \*

When Shun's diet was parched rice and herbs, he behaved as though it were to continue all his life. Yet when he became

<sup>1</sup> The period from 722 to 481 B.C., briefly chronicled by Confucius, and in much greater detail by Tso-ch'iu Ming.

<sup>2</sup> In King Wu's final campaign against Chou Hsin.

<sup>3</sup> Which the soldiers used for pounding their rice. The words quoted occur in the *Book of History*, but refer there to the bloodshed caused by the front ranks of the enemy turning on those behind them. This rather spoils Mencius's argument, unless indeed the passage was altered after his time in consequence of this stricture.

## THE FRONTIER GATE

emperor, wore fine clothes, played the lute, and had Yao's two daughters to wait upon him, it was as though these things had always been so.

★ ★ ★

Henceforth I shall understand the seriousness of killing other people's kinsfolk ; for if I slay another man's father or elder brother, my own father or elder brother will be slain by him.<sup>1</sup> Thus, though the latter deed is not mine, I am only one step removed from it.

★ ★ ★

In olden times, the frontier gate was built to ward off violence ; nowadays it stands in order to carry violence abroad.

★ ★ ★

A bad year will not prove fatal to one who has laid up a full store of provisions ; a wicked generation will not confound one who has laid up a full store of virtue in his heart.

★ ★ ★

Love of fame may induce a man to renounce a kingdom of a thousand chariots ; but if he is not the sort of man to give things up, it will appear in his behaviour over a bowl of rice or a plate of soup.

★ ★ ★

The people are the most important element in a State, next

<sup>1</sup> According to the law of the vendetta in ancient China.

come the spirits of land and grain, and the prince is of least account. Therefore the way to become sovereign is to win the peasantry ; the way to become a feudal lord is to win the sovereign ; and the way to become a minister of State is to win the feudal lord. If a feudal lord endangers the spirits of land and grain, he is removed and another put in his place. When the sacrificial victims have been perfect, the bowls of millet clean, and the sacrifices offered at the right season, yet drought or floods follow, then the spirits of land and grain are changed and others put in their place.

\* \* \*

A sage is the teacher of a hundred generations. Po I and Hui of Liu-hsia were such ; and the mere report of Po I's character will make vicious men pure and weak men resolute, while the mere report of Hui's character will make mean men open-handed and narrow men broad-minded. They burst upon the world long ages ago, yet no one hearing of their example after all that lapse of time but is uplifted in spirit. Could this be so had they not been Sages ? And how much greater must have been the effect on those who came into personal contact with them !<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

Mo Ch'i said : I suffer much wrong from slanderous

<sup>1</sup> This glowing eulogy contrasts rather strangely with the criticisms we saw passed on these same two men on page 51.

tongues.—Mencius said : Do not be distressed. Public men are a special mark for the many-tongued multitude. It is said in the *Book of Songs* : ' My heart is anxious and sad, For I am hated by all the meaner sort.' This might have been said by Confucius. And again : ' Though he could not disarm their wrath, His own fame suffered no lapse.' This might apply to King Wên.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Men of worth used to shed light on others out of their own enlightenment. Now they would shed light on others out of their own murky ignorance.

\* \* \*

Mencius said to his disciple Kao : A footpath across the hills, if increasingly used, becomes a road, but if it falls into disuse, it is soon choked up with weeds. Your mind, Sir, has been choked up in this way.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : The desire of the mouth is for taste, of the eye for colour, of the ear for sound, of the nose for smell, of the four limbs for ease and repose :—these are things ordained by our nature ; but the princely man does not think of them thus when the Will of God intervenes. Love between father and son, duty between sovereign and subject, ceremony between host and guest, wisdom among the worthy, the Way of Heaven for the Sage :—these are things ordained

## GRADATIONS OF CHARACTER

by God ; but the princely man does not think of them thus when they become second nature.

\* \* \*

Hao-shêng Pu-hai asked saying : What sort of man is Yo Chêng Tzŭ ?<sup>1</sup>—Mencius replied : He is a good man and true.—What do you mean by those epithets ?—One who is lovable may be called a good man. One whose goodness is inborn may be called a true man. One whose goodness is abundant may be called a fine man. One whose abundant goodness shines through him may be called a great man. One whose greatness has a transforming power may be called a Sage. A Sage who is beyond our power of comprehension may be called a divine man.<sup>2</sup> Yo Chêng Tzŭ has the qualities of the first two, but falls short of the other four.

\* \* \*

Mencius said : Those who flee the doctrines of Mo will take refuge with Yang ;<sup>3</sup> and, fleeing the doctrines of Yang, they will take refuge in the system of the scholar.<sup>4</sup> Let such be received into the fold without more ado. At present, those who dispute with the followers of Yang and Mo are like people chasing a stray pig : no sooner have they got it into the sty than they must proceed to tie it up by the leg.

\* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> See page 105.

<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that Aristotle's gradations of moral character also begin with the man of heroic or divine virtue.

<sup>3</sup> See pages 69, 112.

<sup>4</sup> i.e., Confucianism.



There are three things which a feudal prince should prize : the land, the people, and orderly government. On one who prizes pearls and jade calamity is bound to fall.

\* \* \*

P'ên-ch'êng Kua<sup>1</sup> having taken office in Ch'i, Mencius said : He is a doomed man. When P'ên-ch'êng Kua was put to death, the disciples asked, saying : How did our Master know that he was going to die ?—Mencius replied : As a man, he was not without some ability, but the philosophy of the princely man was beyond his ken. His cleverness was enough to bring about his death, but no more.

\* \* \*

When Mencius came to T'êng, he was lodged in the Upper Palace. A half-finished shoe had been left there on a window-sill, but when the housekeeper came to look for it, it was not to be found. Somebody asked Mencius about it, saying : It looks as if it had been hidden away by one of your followers.—Why, do you think that they come here to steal shoes ?—Hardly that. But when you, Master, open a class, you never turn away those who want to come nor run after those who want to go. So long as they come with a wish to learn, you accept them without further ado.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

Mencius said : There are certain things which every man

<sup>1</sup> A man who for a short time had studied under Mencius.

<sup>2</sup> It seems to be implied that Mencius, by opening his doors to all and sundry without further inquiry, may have allowed men of loose principles to slip in.

## THE SPIRIT OF BENEVOLENCE

feels he cannot bear : extend that feeling into the positive sphere,<sup>1</sup> and you have the spirit of benevolence. There are certain things which every man will refuse to do : extend that feeling of repugnance into the positive field, and you have the spirit of righteousness. If a man can develop the state of mind which makes him wish not to hurt others, his benevolence will be more than enough for practical purposes. If a man can develop the state of mind which makes him shrink from breaking into another man's house, his righteousness will be more than enough for practical purposes. If a man can develop the feeling which makes him resent familiarity of address, he will do nothing unrighteous wherever he goes. When a scholar says what he should not, or does not say what he should, in order to gain some unworthy end, he is in each case doing the same sort of thing as breaking into another man's house.

\* \* \*

Words concerned with the near, yet pointing far away, are good words. Principles concentrating on the essential, yet wide of application, are good principles. The words of the princely man do not come from below the girdle,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Literally, 'to what he will bear'. The meaning may be illustrated by the incident of the ox on page 27, when the King feels he cannot bear to look upon the frightened animal. This negative feeling may be developed into one of active love and sympathy for one's fellow-men, which is true benevolence. Cf. also pages 49, 50.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., are all from near the heart. Some think the reference is to a passage in the *Book of Rites* : 'The Son of Heaven must not be looked at above his collar or below his girdle' ; but this makes no sense at all.

but the deeper principles are there. What the princely man sets his heart on is self-development, but the Empire thereby obtains peace.<sup>1</sup> A sad failing in man is that he neglects his own field to weed his neighbour's ; that his demands on others are heavy, while the burden he lays on himself is light.

\* \* \*

Yao and Shun were naturally good ; T'ang and Wu reverted to natural goodness.<sup>2</sup> The highest degree of virtue is indicated in the man whose every act and gesture is dictated by right feeling. Wailing for the dead should be the expression of real grief, not done for the benefit of the living. The path of virtue should be pursued without turning back, and with no eye to emolument. The words one utters should be true, but with no eye to correctness of conduct. The nobler type of man simply acts according to the rule of right, and then awaits whatever may be ordained.

\* \* \*

Those who act as mentors to the great should look down on them rather than gape at their magnificence. Their lofty halls, their huge projecting roof-beams, should not be for me, could I have my wish ; neither should the array of eatables served up to them, nor the hundreds of maids

<sup>1</sup> The first two sentences in this chapter are elaborated in the two that follow.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. page 113.

## MIND DEVELOPMENT

that attend their pleasure ; nor yet their wines and their junketing, their horses galloping in the chase, their retinue of a thousand chariots : nothing of what they hold dear should be for me. All that I myself hold dear are the wise ordinances of antiquity. Why should I stand in awe of those highly placed ones ?

\* \* \*

For mind-development there is nothing better than restricting one's desires. A man of few desires may fail to preserve certain qualities of the mind, but they will be few ; a man of many desires may succeed in preserving certain qualities, but these again will be few.

\* \* \*

From Yao and Shun to T'ang was over 500 years : Yü and Kao Yao had seen and known those two sages, while T'ang knew them from what he had heard. From T'ang to King Wên was over 500 years : I Yin and Lai Chu<sup>1</sup> had seen and known the former, while King Wên knew him from what he had heard. From King Wên to Confucius was over 500 years : T'ai-kung Wang<sup>2</sup> and San I-shêng had seen and known the former, while Confucius knew him from what he had heard. From Confucius to the present day is some-

<sup>1</sup> One of T'ang's ministers.

<sup>2</sup> The popular title of Lü Shang, who at the age of eighty became the chief counsellor of King Wên, and is the hero of many legends. San I-shêng was another minister of the same monarch.

## THE CONFUCIAN TRADITION

thing over a hundred years : no further from us than that is the time of our great Sage, and his place of abode is very near to us indeed. Is there no one, then, to carry on the tradition ? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text of Mencius is full of obscurities, and this concluding sentence, which is chiefly made up of particles, is as obscure as any. It seems to be implied that Mencius feels himself called upon to hand on the torch.